



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

<b>Title</b>	Contribution of George Smeaton (1814-1889) to theological thought
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<b>Qualification</b>	PhD
<b>Year</b>	1960

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF  
GEORGE SMEATON (1814-1889)  
to  
THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

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A Thesis  
Presented to the Post Graduate  
School of Theology  
University of Edinburgh

In partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the Doctor  
of Philosophy Degree.

by  
Homer L. Goddard, Jr.  
July, 1953.



Gratefully dedicated

to

My wife, Isabelle

and

our friends

Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. McCollough

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## PREFACE

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It has been an inspiration to study the life and thought of George Smeaton, especially with the intention of presenting it in such a way that his particular contribution to his own time, and its worth in the light of to-day's knowledge may be properly evaluated. Smeaton represents the extreme orthodox view of his day; accordingly most of his writing and teaching follows well-marked trails. But as one who knew and understood the new thought that began its conquest of British theology in the latter part of Smeaton's life, his emphasis on certain doctrines against the "mediating school," and his refutation of the main contentions of its leaders, are well worth renewed consideration to-day. References to the theological thought of the present day are for the purpose of illuminating both the strengths and weaknesses of conservative theology of Smeaton's time, for he himself claims that he wrote only for the purpose of conserving the essential doctrine as taught in the Bible and accepted by the Church.

Accordingly, chapters II and III seek to delineate Smeaton's teaching on Inspiration and Election, particularly as they qualify his development of the doctrines of the Atonement and the Holy Spirit, which are presented in chapters IV and V. Chapter VI brings together the records of his writing and speaking concerning the Church and State controversies of the 19th century in Scotland. In the concluding chapter, the author seeks to discern the elements of both temporal and eternal value in Smeaton's theological thought.

The author has sought to follow British rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, and has also attempted to adopt for this thesis Smeaton's capitalization of words. The author has endeavoured to be entirely objective throughout the thesis, restricting personal opinion to occasional footnotes, but if his personal sympathy with the character of Dr. Smeaton has caused any element of personal bias to be noticeable, he trusts it will not impair the conclusions reached. This study has enriched the author's own understanding of the riches of Christian theology, and deepened his appreciation of the boundless resources and privileges of the Christian faith.

Sincere appreciation must be expressed to the Reverend Professor James S. Stewart, the Reverend Professor John Burleigh, and the Reverend Principal John Baillie for their invaluable help and suggestions and their consistent courtesy and kindness.

## CHAPTER I

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### LIFE OF DR. GEORGE SMEATON

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#### Early Life and Education

George Smeaton was born near Hume, Berwickshire in 1814. His mother had not been expected to survive his birth, but she did so, and in gratitude to God she dedicated her new-born son, George, to the ministry.<sup>1</sup> This young man was a direct descendant of Thomas Smeaton the great reformer who had succeeded Andrew Melville as principal of Glasgow University in 1580.<sup>2</sup> With this background it is not too surprising that Smeaton accepted Christ as his personal Saviour very early in life, and was always very sure that he was a child of God. When he was old enough to understand, he also acquiesced in his mother's dedication of himself to the ministry and never deviated from his own decision the rest of his life.

Receiving his primary education at the parish school of Greenlaw, he very early began to exhibit the characteristic devotion to study and unusual brilliance of mind that were to be so tremendous an asset in all of his future schooling and adult life. He attended Edinburgh University where he distinguished himself scholastically, but his greatest accomplishments in honours were yet to come in the Theological

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon and Smith, In Memoriam, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> William Knight, Some Nineteenth Century Scotsmen, p. 106.

Hall. In seminary, George Smeaton was recognized by professors and students alike as the best student of his year.<sup>1</sup> During his last year a certain political club was dissolved and not knowing what to do with unused surplus funds they had on hand, they gave one hundred pounds to Dr. Chalmers to be given as a prize to the best student of his class. No one was surprised when Smeaton was awarded the prize.<sup>2</sup> How thrilled young Smeaton was, for he was able to invest in one of the things he most cherished throughout his lifetime - books; and he spent the entire one hundred pounds purchasing such books as Migne's Patristic Library in 70 folio volumes, a first edition of Calvin's Opera, a fine copy of Poli Synopsis, and 5 folio volumes of Erasmus' works. This was the foundation of Smeaton's amazing library of well over 15,000 volumes, which upon his death were presented by his son to the New College library.<sup>3</sup> The striking feature of this library, in addition to its inclusion of some of the choicest works of the Patristic Fathers, was the manifest great variety and immense scope of his reading, making him in some ways the most erudite scholar of his time. He knew thoroughly the Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, Puritan, Dutch, and Modern German schools of theology, and was so especially familiar with the German critical school that he was able to discuss and criticize its tenets in a manner that was difficult to

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon and Smith, Op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> William Knight, Op. cit., p. 109.

counter successfully.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently Smeaton's only serious competitor for scholarship in seminary was a young man named James Halley who was one of his good friends. Mr. Halley died of consumption at a very early age, but his brilliant mind and deeply spiritual nature undoubtedly made a great impression upon Smeaton and the others of their class. This was reflected in an election for curator of the New College library. Dr. Chalmers proposed thirty-six names with Mr. Halley's at the top of the list. The students selected six for this position of honour, and the final vote showed eighty-one for Smeaton, eighty for Halley.<sup>2</sup> As this result honoured his love of books, it also whetted his desire for greater knowledge, which he proceeded to acquire by the most exemplary discipline of his mind.

. His best subject was Greek, in which he was absolutely supreme. As an indication of his exceptional discipline of mind and determination, it is recorded that he read straight through a great folio Greek lexicon "so as to fix the meaning of every Greek word in his mind."<sup>3</sup> Asked if this were true, he replied, "Well, there is some truth in it. I suppose you did foolish things yourself in those days."<sup>4</sup> With such prodigious labour Smeaton was unconsciously preparing himself for the great teaching ministry that lay before him.

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon and Smith, *Op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoir of James Halley*, pp. 76, 77.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon and Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 35-36.

### His Ministry

Following his graduation, Smeaton was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh as a probationer on October 1837, and was immediately appointed assistant to the Reverend James Buchanan of North Leith who later became a fellow professor at New College. After serving a year there, he was ordained by Edinburgh Presbytery to the new charge of Morningside, then about a mile from the city. Though he only worked in that church, now called the Morningside Parish Church, for a short time, he captured the admiration and love of his people. All the while he also earnestly studied the Scriptures and theology, study which was to be exceedingly profitable in later years. 1840 was an important year for Smeaton. He was not only called to be minister of the parish of Falkland in Fifeshire, but also he married Miss Janet Gould who shared his trials and blessings for nearly fifty years of married happiness. He experienced a happy and fruitful three years in Falkland, but as always, he relentlessly pursued his personal studies.

Meanwhile, the Church of Scotland was shattered by the fires of dissension that caused the history-making disruption of 1843, and Smeaton was one of the hundreds who followed Moderator Walsh and Dr. Chalmers out of the Established Church to form the Free Church of Scotland in protesting government interference in spiritual matters.

It is significant that only a few months before the Disruption, there was a probability of the chairs becoming vacant in the theological faculties of both Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, and so outstanding and distinguished was Smeaton's scholarship even at that early age, that he was approached twice and asked if he would accept nomination to the chair of either college. His integrity is typically manifested in his reply: "While profoundly sensible of the high honour thus paid me, I trust I shall not be thought ungrateful if I say that I could accept nothing, until the present anxious crisis in the Church has passed."<sup>1</sup> But after the Disruption he was no longer a minister of the Established Church and almost immediately he received a call to the Free Church at Auchterarder.

The Free Church at Falkland did not let Smeaton go easily. In the Minutes of the Auchterarder Free Church, we find this notation:

"The congregation of Falkland had appeared before Presbytery and objected to Mr. Smeaton's removal. . . The committee heard this report and considered the great importance of urging Mr. Smeaton's translation to Auchterarder."<sup>2</sup>

At the Presbytery meeting at Cupar on August 22, 1843, the Minutes disclose the following decision and reaction:

"The Presbytery resolved. . . Mr. Smeaton be loosed from his present charge and translated to Auchterarder according to the rules of the church. . . From which judgement Mr. Brodie dissented on the ground that the removal of Mr. Smeaton will be productive of very great

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<sup>1</sup> William Knight, Op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes, Auchterarder Free Church. 5 August, 1843.



injury to the cause of Christ at Falkland, while his settlement at Auchterarder will be of comparatively little advantage."<sup>1</sup>

With his accustomed forthrightness and brevity, Smeaton's move to Auchterarder is signified in a letter in the files of Auchterarder's St. Andrews Church written on a scrap of paper, "Rev. Sir: I hereby accept the call from the congregation at Auchterarder and am your ob't servant. George Smeaton."<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton had a most difficult task in taking over the Free Church in the atmosphere that was evident in Auchterarder - for it was here that the first battle had been fought over whether the State had the final word in calling a minister. A man named Young had been presented to the parish as its minister, but only three signed the call and it had been opposed by 237 heads of families. So the Presbytery refused to ordain him. The Court of Session had reversed the decision of Presbytery, when Young appealed, and had "forced" him upon the parish. By 1839 an appeal had gone to the House of Lords, but that body upheld the Court's decision.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the church at Auchterarder was already divided, fighting and unhappy when Smeaton came there a few months after the Disruption, and his task was to "reconcile the conflicting sections among the Secessionists in that historic parish."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes, Cupar Free Church Presbytery at Cupar the 22nd day of August, 1843.

<sup>2</sup> Addressed to the Moderator of Auchterarder Presbytery, dated 26 August, 1843.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart and Cameron, *Free Church of Scotland*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> William Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

At Auchterarder Smeaton applied himself with great diligence to the challenge before him, and it appears that his exceptional graciousness and Christian wisdom and tact produced a warm united fellowship in the Free Church there. His ministry to the sick and sorrowful extended far beyond the range of his pastoral responsibilities.<sup>1</sup> His preaching was never coldly formal because he knew the power of the Gospel and used the "resources of a well-stored and severely disciplined mind"<sup>2</sup> to proclaim it, but "with none of the artificial accomplishments of oratory, and with a mind too earnestly occupied with the matter to give a thought to the manner, the young minister preached very nearly as did the venerable professor."<sup>3</sup> So it is easy to see why Smeaton was suddenly called to the Chair of Divinity at the Free Church College of Aberdeen in 1853; and though he reluctantly left his beloved parish, he looked forward to a tremendous opportunity in his new and wider field. He puts his own feelings in these words which indicate the rich fruitfulness of his ministry at Auchterarder:

"One stadium lies behind me - that of my ministry, which of all scenes in my memory, is the most fresh and fragrant. As to the future, its form and fashion are unknown. But a happier period than has been passed in the ministry of the word I can never hope to enjoy in this world. Nothing could compensate, indeed, to a Professor for the loss of the pastoral relation, or could prompt him to resign it, if the office with which he is invested did not, in a manner, lead him to minister to the Church at large, and prove serviceable to others

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon and Smith, Op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

who are to occupy that relation which he himself has felt to be so blessed. Were there no prospect of this sort, his cold literary labour would be a poor exchange. But the ulterior prospect of contributing, by the blessing from on high, to form and equip a ministry who shall, in their day, acquit themselves as a good savour of Christ, reconciles me to forego a relation which, in proportion as it is sustained on both sides by spiritual communion, forms the fairest and most pleasant oasis in this world. He who holds the stars in his right hand, appointing to each his place, seems, moreover, to have indicated, with sufficient clearness, through the Church, His will and my duty; and He may have service for me in this place, in company with my colleagues, with whom it is a privilege to be associated. I have loved the preaching of the Word above every other occupation. But if enabled to communicate to the rising ministry the disposition to regard their work, in any sphere, as the highest, happiest and noblest on earth; if a band of youthful BRAINERDS, NEFFS, M'CHYNES, rise up around us; if we behold coming forward to supply the ministerial ranks men of faith, zeal, and prayer, whose joy in their work shall find expression in the words of Rutherford, 'next to Christ I have but one joy: the apple of the eye of my delight is to preach Christ my Lord,' then I shall feel that the pastoral relation, with its sunny confidence and fragrant ordinances, has not been resigned in vain."<sup>1</sup>

### His Professorship

In 1853 Smeaton was installed as Professor of Systematic and Exegetical Theology in Aberdeen College, and it was as a professor his life work was to be consummated - fourteen years as a minister, thirty-six as a professor. He was qualified for this work by his previous extensive study, which, in spite of its intensity and scope, never caused him to shirk one iota of his pastoral duties and opportunities. While actively engaged in his pastorate at Auchterarder, he first called the

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<sup>1</sup> George Smeaton, The Basis of Christian Doctrine in Divine Fact, pp. 1, 2.

attention of Scottish theologians to the monumental work of the German higher critical school by incisive articles in the leading reviews of his time. He was thoroughly informed about the most minute developments of German philosophy and theology, as well as Dutch theology, and during his professorship he became personally acquainted with many of these German critics and had many helpful discussions with them on theory and theology that are reflected in the theological works which he finally had time to contribute, as well as in his enlightened teaching.

In Aberdeen, Smeaton "found a sphere eminently suited to his powers."<sup>1</sup> The small number of students enabled him to exercise individual influence over them which was most salutary. He was very specially a friend of the students and their confidant in personal as well as theological matters. So when it became evident that Smeaton was about to be removed to New College, Edinburgh, a petition was drawn up at once in Aberdeen and signed by over five hundred ministers, office-bearers, and members of the church in addition to the students, praying him to remain in "the Granite City." But the call was not to be denied, and when it was made public that of the three names proposed, Professor Smeaton had won over Dr. Brown by nineteen votes and over Mr. Rainy, then a very successful pastor of the High Church in Edinburgh, by one hundred and nine votes, Smeaton felt he should leave Aberdeen after a short but worthwhile three and one half

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<sup>1</sup> William Knight , Op. cit., p. 111.

year term there and come to Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup> While it is true that many voted against Dr. Rainy in order that he might continue his most successful ministry of High Church, it is still a tribute to the regard and esteem in which Professor Smeaton was already held, that his election should have been so decisive over such eminent and worthy gentlemen. He became the Professor of New Testament Exegetical Theology at New College and remained in that chair the rest of his life, filling it with such honour and distinction that he was designated by a later generation as "the most learned theologian in the Free Church, and a man of deep and unaffected godliness."<sup>2</sup> In Edinburgh he became a part of a most noteworthy faculty including Principal Cunningham, Church History; Professor James Buchanan, Systematic Theology; Professor James Bannerman, Apologetics and Christian Ethics; Professor John Duncan, Old Testament and Hebrew; and later Professor A. B. Davidson. The fellowship among these professors was rich and satisfying, so much so that Smeaton felt it a personal and irreparable loss when Dr. Cunningham died on December 15, 1861. Smeaton succeeded him as editor of the British and Foreign Evangelical Review. The deaths of Professors Buchanan and Bannerman in 1868 also caused Smeaton real grief.

From 1863 on, Smeaton was engaged in battling against what he felt to be an unnecessary and injurious union toward

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart & Cameron, Op. cit., p. 31.

which the Free and United Presbyterian Churches were working. He marshalled all the resources of his great factual knowledge in addition to his remarkable ability to interpret the significance of movements and their effects, to help cause, in 1873, a cessation of open efforts toward union until a later time.

When many friends sought to nominate Smeaton to become principal of New College in 1874, he declined the candidature for that office, preferring to use his time in teaching and writing instead of accepting the honour that might have been his along with its extra burden of administrative detail.<sup>1</sup>

#### Last Years and Death

His latter years were dedicated to three principal avenues of service: teaching faithfully and lovingly the wonders of the New Testament at New College, ministering to the sick and sorrowful far beyond the bounds of his immediate seminary family, and writing the great works which alone give us a fair picture of the depth and breadth of his theological insight.

In addition to his few pamphlets, sermons and articles in magazines, his main published works are only four in number, but they left their mark on his time. His two volumes on the atonement are still considered to be among the very best on that subject, from a Calvinist viewpoint.

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes, Free Church, Presbytery of Glasgow, 19 February, 1874.



These two, published in 1868 and 1870, are The Doctrine of Atonement as Taught by Christ and The Doctrine of Atonement as Taught by the Apostles. In 1869 he was prevailed upon to write a Memoir of Alexander Thomson of Panchory, a very splendid outstanding Christian country gentleman of his acquaintance. The third of his great works on theology, published in 1882 was entitled The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. His final contribution to the vital literature of theology went to press in February, 1889, just two months before his death. This second edition of The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit included nearly sixty pages more than the first edition of 1882. One of his colleagues said at the memorial service held the Sunday after his death, "The works themselves are a practical refutation of the idea of the incompatibility of powerful intellect and fearless investigation, with the strictest orthodoxy."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton's earthly career closed in the most desirable manner. The last day of his life he spent in discharging important professional duties, writing kindly letters to students, friends and colleagues, conversing with his beloved wife, retiring quietly to bed. On Sunday morning, April 14, 1889, he was suddenly stricken with angina pectoris, and that day he worshipped in the veritable presence of his Lord whom

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon and Smith. Op. cit., p. 41

he had loved and served so well and faithfully.

### His Character and Influence

Those who knew him realized that the greatest reason for the power of Smeaton's life was that he was a man who truly knew God intimately and personally. In the two sermons preached at the memorial service of his death, he was compared by Professor Smith to Barnabas: "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,"<sup>1</sup> and was called in the other, "A man of God,"<sup>2</sup> Rev. Gordon saying, "If any man could rightly be called by such a name, it was he of whom we are now speaking."<sup>3</sup> The writer feels that from a Christian viewpoint few higher compliments could be paid a man who sought to be a servant of the Lord, and even from the sparse information available, it is clearly evident that throughout his life he consistently manifested the character traits that justified such loving praise.

As is often true of many of the greatest spirits, he was an exceedingly humble and self-effacing man. Dr. Smith says of him,

"With all his extensive and minute learning, he was a man of singular modesty. I had frequent occasion to converse with him on subjects in his own department; and it was amusing to mark the way in which he always spoke as if I knew as much, or more, of the matter than he did. Only a perfect assurance of his absolute truthfulness prevented my doubting

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1 Acts, 11:24.

2 I Timothy, 6:11.

3 Gordon and Smith, Op. cit., p. 13



whether this humility were not assumed. Perhaps it was that his knowing so much made him see all the more clearly how much he had yet to learn."<sup>1</sup>

His son says of him: "I never heard my father say an unkind word against those from whom he differed most, and ability in his opponents was always praised with generous appreciation."<sup>2</sup> This was true especially concerning his controversies with the German critical school from which he differed so radically.

"While he was ever ready to acknowledge the great amount of good that he found in their writings, he was happily able to discriminate between the corn and chaff . . . I specially remember the account of the system and the influence of Schleiermacher, whom, in spite of the tendencies to which he took decided exception, he regarded as one of the greatest intellects of the age."<sup>3</sup>

The only three criticisms the writer has found of Smeaton's character are very minor to say the least. The first from his son simply indicates his strong convictions about doctrinal truth. "I must admit his view of doctrinal truth made rather too little allowance for possible difficulties among thoughtful students." But "his criticisms on his students' work were always dictated by a desire to find out something to commend rather than to criticise."<sup>4</sup> The second, gleaned from conversation with a gentleman who was a young lad when Smeaton died, was combined

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1 Ibid., pp. 40, 41.

2 William Knight, Op. cit., p. 115.

3 Gordon and Smith, Op. cit., p. 40.

4 William Knight, Op. cit., p. 115.

in the suggestion that he shrank from controversy and tended to be a "pussy-foot." This is not confirmed by his writings or his life history, since he not only came out in the Disruption, but also spoke forceably on behalf of the minority in the union disputes. The real answer may well be found in his extreme humility, chronicled above. The third half-criticism came from a grand-daughter who was five when Smeaton died, and she merely stated to the writer that he seemed to live so much in heaven (from what she heard) that he did not have much contact with earth. And this is a reminder of a great Old Testament saint, who "walked with God: and he was not, for God took him,"<sup>1</sup> for it is manifest that Smeaton truly walked with God all his life.

Such communion with his Father, God, undoubtedly enabled him to be concerned with, and an unusual source of comfort to, those in trouble. Sufferers seemed to be attracted to him as by a magnet, and from his fellowship they never ceased to find an easing of their sorrow or grief.

"For such ministrations as these he was especially qualified by much experience of suffering and sorrow. Again and again he had to gaze with tearful eyes on the empty crib in the nursery, and to listen in vain for the tramp of the little feet that was as music to his ear. Again and again he had to mark the fading of manly strength and maidenly bloom. Of six children, only one survives him, and that one

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis, 5: 24.

has been for many years in a far-off land."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Smith bestowed on Smeaton the name of Barnabas "Son of Consolation" in this way also, saying that it fitted no man better. Also this ministry of comfort was an unspeakable blessing to him in that it kept him in touch with people and preserved him from degenerating into the mere scholar and book-worm. So "all through his life he was made to feel that the Gospel is not a matter of speculation of theory, but a blessed medicine for healing the wounds of the stricken and wiping away the tears of the mourners."<sup>2</sup>

In the eyes of his colleagues Smeaton held a place of highest esteem. They honoured him for his brilliant mind, his scholarship, his integrity, his humility, and also

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon and Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 39. Concerning Smeaton's family, the following information was gathered from his descendants now living: of Smeaton's six children, three died as infants; George, died at the age of 29 very suddenly after a brief but brilliant career as a judge in India, having made the highest marks up to that time in Indian civil service examinations; and Isabella, equally brilliant, died at the age of 19. The only one to outlive Professor Smeaton, named Oliphant, was a newspaper man, but he also preached a great deal, and was kindly and good. Oliphant Smeaton's only child was a daughter, Aileen, born in Whangarei, Australia, who married John Davidson, a minister of the Church of Scotland, and she is still living in Edinburgh. They have seven children: Wilma, who as a missionary to India married Wm. Stewart, Scottish preacher of Nagpur and the United Church of India; John, a minister of the Church of Scotland at Sanquhar; Oliphant, a paper-maker; Anna, a church sister; George, an eye-doctor at Durban, Africa; Allan, a history teacher; and Aileen, a nurse. How faithful God is to His promise! (Deuteronomy, 7: 9). In a family of seven, three generations later, there are three in full-time Christian service, and two concerned with alleviating physical suffering and distress. (Note: Since the above was written, Mrs. Aileen Davidson, Dr. Smeaton's only granddaughter died in Edinburgh on 31st July, 1952 at the age of 68).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

apparently for his graciousness, and Christian spirit. It is interesting to read the account of his speech before the Edinburgh Presbytery, Free Church, in November 1870 in comparison with several other speeches. Dr. Smeaton's speech is punctuated with many comments: "Laughter and Applause," "Applause," "Hear, hear," and this is not true of most of the other speeches. So we are left to conclude that either his speaking ability was unusual (which may be true), or that everything he said was well taken because his colleagues admired him so much as a man of God.

The final word that can be said about Dr. Smeaton is that he was first, last and always a man of God, utterly devoted to the cause of Christ. He felt that all his peace and happiness were due to Christ's sacrifice and God's mercy and justice revealed in that sacrifice. His sacred verse was Isaiah, 53: 6 "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "His daily walk and conversation made clearly manifest the strength of the bond that united him to God. His genuine humility of spirit . . . steadfast hold on divine truth . . . fearless defence of . . . the honour and glory of God - all these, warranted men as they thought of or looked upon him to say 'Thou man of God'."<sup>1</sup> In all his labours he never forgot that he was the servant of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 14-15.

"If it was for God, he did it." He never ceased to press salvation on others. How sorely the church needs men like him to-day, men of God! What a joy (to even) read of such a life! "He pointed many souls to heaven, and he has led the way."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

## CHAPTER II

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### DOCTRINE OF REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

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#### Special Validity and Importance of Smeaton's

#### Views on Inspiration

Smeaton's attitude toward the doctrine of inspiration is central to all of his teaching. His view of revelation and inspiration is the basis for his Biblico-exegetical method of procedure in illuminating the other doctrines that he discusses. In a treatise delivered at Aberdeen in 1854, Smeaton says:

"It must be evident at a glance that we must have a perfect medium of revelation, free from error and from the slightest tincture of mistake, if we have an accurately drawn portraiture of the personal Redeemer. A compromise on inspiration is fatal. . . to admit a partially inspired Bible is, in the first instance, to accept Christ's coming in the flesh, and, in the second instance, to subvert it. The revelation of Him, it is true, may not be perfect in degree, and cannot be till we enjoy the unveiled beatific vision. But that it is perfect in kind, so far as it goes, is evident from the very necessity of the case, if we are to maintain, as every Christian must do, that we have a true image of Christ. Not only must the fact be perfect, which of course all Christian minds admit, but the representation must be perfect too. Of a historical fact nothing but a historical testimony can give information, showing the acting personage in a realistic way, and reproducing, as it were, before our eyes, with fresh impressions, what took place on the stage of Time for us as well as for those immediately concerned; and therefore in all that really concerns the spiritual life, the representation must be as perfect as the fact. Scripture is the FORMAL TRUTH, just as Christ is the SUBSTANTIAL TRUTH. Nay, the divine Word, when viewed aright, is not something thrust in between us and the fact. It is the fact self-evidenced.

It is the personal Redeemer self-manifested; and if we behold Him in any other mirror than in the historical mirror set before us in the Gospels, we look at a false image - at an image of our own minds. The Word, then, as the self-manifestation of the Redeemer, and as the channel for communicating all His fulness, must be perfect."<sup>1</sup>

In his work on the Holy Spirit, he writes: "A surrender of Biblical Revelation is fatal."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is understood that to him the Bible is an infallible book. This is quite remarkable when we realise that Smeaton knew the German critical school as no other Scottish divines of his time knew it.

"At a time when German theology and philosophy were almost unknown among theological students, he was already familiarly acquainted with all the most minute developments of philosophy from Wolf and Crusius to Fichte, Jacobi, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer and Totze, and of theology from Bahrđt and Schleiermacher to Daub, Neander, Tholuck, Baur, Strauss, Stier and others."<sup>3</sup>

The kernel of his thought in relation to the German viewpoint is found most succinctly in his introduction to an address by Thomas Chalmers on inspiration.<sup>4</sup> He felt that, in this article, Chalmers gave the antidote to all incorrect opinions on inspiration. Chalmers neither "forestalls historic proof or dispenses with rational evidence."<sup>5</sup> This is a good index to Smeaton's own attitude which is expressed in a presentation of the infallible authority of all Scripture in contrast to the "crude German theory," against the

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<sup>1</sup> George Smeaton, The Basis of Christian Doctrine in Divine Fact, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> George Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> William Knight, Some Nineteenth Century Scotsmen, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> George Smeaton, Introductory Note "On the Inspiration of the Old and New Testaments," A chapter from Thomas Chalmers.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 1.



"mediating theology which took its rise from Schleiermacher, and which has more recently been represented on this point by Tholuck, Rothe, and Auberlen, which allows a Revelation in Historic facts, but denies the Biblical or book-revelation in any true acceptation of the term. Revelation is restricted by them to the divine facts and words of the personal Redeemer but disjoined from any accompanying inspiration on the mind of those who composed the records. In a word, the Historical Revelation is isolated from the Book-Revelation. . . All this leads, by natural consequence, to a treatment of the Bible akin to that which a petulant modern reviewer metes out to a new literary production. Divine authority there is none in the book as such: certainty is at an end: conjecture reigns paramount: mental autonomy under law to none has chartered licence." <sup>1</sup>

To-day, this same battle goes on, although many feel that there is no real conflict, since the champions of "verbal" inspiration, discredited and disgraced, have been forced to flee the field of battle in the face of scientific discovery and Biblical criticism, high and low, of the past hundred years. The attitude of Smeaton, as one of the first acknowledged scholars of Britain to face the Higher Critical tide of thought in its comparative infancy, is helpful in evaluating a similar position to-day, when regarding Scripture, the "autonomy of the human mind reigns supreme," resulting in the fact that, in regard to the meaning of verbal inspiration, there are many varying shades of thought.

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2. Schleiermacher's view is indicated by the following: "The New Testament writings are such a preaching [Christ's and the apostles'] come down to us, hence faith springs from them too: but in no sense conditionally on the acceptance of a special doctrine about these writings, as having had their origin in special divine revelation or inspiration. On the contrary, faith might arise in the same way though no more survived than testimonies of which it had to be admitted that, in addition to Christ's essential witness to Himself and the original preaching of His disciples, they also contained much in detail that had been misinterpreted, or inaccurately grasped, or set in a wrong light owing to confusions of memory." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, p. 593.



It will be necessary to review briefly the history of the doctrine in order to understand and qualify Smeaton's position, and also to give an adequate perspective, so that his entire contribution to the theological thought of his time as well as to-day may assume its proper importance, for it may be that the comparative obscurity of many theologians of that day has been caused by their "outmoded" convictions concerning inspiration.

#### Brief Review of History of this Doctrine

From the earliest times, "there was a Jewish view of the verbal inspiration of their sacred writings, formed and fostered in connection with the work of the scribes of the Law."<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle Paul, as a Jew, and then as a Christian, accepted the Old Testament as verbally inspired,

"For him, as for all true Jews, the Old Testament carried an overwhelming authority. Every part of it, every word of it, was the authentic voice of God. . . . Any . . . debate could be settled by a quotation . . . for . . . when God's own literal words had been heard, nothing more remained to be said. . . . A single ~~verse~~ <sup>scripture</sup> (such as in Romans 12: 19 or 14: 11) . . . is deemed sufficient to clinch an argument and foreclose all discussion."<sup>2</sup>

"The conception of Inspiration which was held by Christians . . . was probably in the main an inheritance from Judaism. This is a natural inference from the fact that the idea of verbal inspiration was at first associated much more definitely with them, and

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<sup>1</sup> Bethune Baker. An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> James S. Stewart. A Man in Christ, p. 39.

only indirectly and by transference with the selected Christian literature. The early Christian idea was, as we have seen, rather of inspired men than of an inspired book; though the transition is an easy one, as the writings of inspired men would naturally also be inspired."<sup>1</sup>

Justin, Tertullian, Irenaeus and Origen all assumed and maintained a clear, strong view of the inspiration of Scripture although each had slight variations in emphasis. Origen also opened up the theory of the three-fold sense of the meaning of Scripture originally propounded by Clement that eventually led to the interpretation of much of the Bible in the wildest flights of allegorical fantasy<sup>2</sup> in the name of the "spiritual" sense of Scripture.

In the time of Augustine, the allegorical method of interpretation was still in high favour, but never for a moment was there any question as to the literal accuracy of the Scriptures. In his book of instruction for catechumens, Augustine says,

"But most of all they should be taught to listen to the divine Scriptures, so that solid diction may not seem mean to them merely because it is not pretentious, and that they may not imagine that the words and deeds of men, of which we read in those books rolled up and concealed in fleshly coverings are not to be unfolded and revealed so as to convey a meaning, but are to be taken literally."<sup>3</sup>

This was a verbal theory, for

"in common with many other Fathers, he insisted that the

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<sup>1</sup> Bethune-Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine. The First Catechetical Instruction. (tr. by Rev. Joseph P. Christopher). p. 33.

Bible contains an authoritative and infallible account of the world and its phenomena and that therefore any further study of them is superfluous.<sup>1</sup>

But we must note three distinctions through all this history: (1) While it is true that all Scripture was infallible, there was a great difference of opinion as to what belonged in the Scripture, and the canon fluctuated to a considerable degree as far as the New Testament was concerned. The Apocalypse was from time to time omitted from the canon even after the Reformation. Many canons included the Apocrypha. Second Peter, Jude, and Second and Third John were most often held to be spurious, and because of its late external evidence of origin (as late as 230-250 A.D.) Second Peter headed the list of doubtful books.<sup>2</sup> But in April 1546 the Council of Trent finally "established" the canon as the Roman Catholic church has it to-day.<sup>3</sup> (2) The infallibility of Scripture did not involve a denial of contradictions on insignificant details. Origen admits these contradictions<sup>4</sup> and others called attention to them upon occasion. (3) A difference in the degree of inspiration regarding different parts of the Bible was surely recognised.

"Tertullian points out that St. Paul recognises different degrees of inspiration. . . Origen. . . used . . . a wider view in regard to an ascending and descending scale of inspiration. Origen saw that there was a difference between the inspiration of Christ and all other inspiration. The inspiration of the prophets

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1 A. C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II. "The West from Tertullian to Erasmus." p. 122.

2 A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 153.

3 Marcus Dods, The Bible: Its Origin and Nature, pp. 33-34.

4 Bethune-Baker. Op. cit., p. 54.

was given them at particular times and for particular purposes; they had visitations of the Spirit which ceased when they had served their turn. Only upon Christ did the Holy Spirit abide continually."<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the Reformation verbal inspiration, with slight variations was still the accepted view. Luther was very definite in his belief in the literal accuracy of the canon, but had varying ideas concerning what composed the canon. He said:

"I have learned to ascribe this honour (namely infallibility) only to books which are termed canonical, so that I confidently believe that not one of their authors erred. . . . The Holy Spirit is the plainest writer and speaker in heaven and earth. . . . Therefore we should not ask our reason but give the honour to the Holy Ghost that what he says is divine truth, and believe his Word, blind, even putting out the eyes of our reason."<sup>2</sup>

"The saints were subject to error in their writings and to sin in their lives; Scripture cannot err."<sup>3</sup> But as to the canon, Luther considered Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation to be non-apostolic: "My spirit cannot fit itself into this book (Revelation). There is one sufficient reason for me not to think highly of it - Christ is not taught or known in it."<sup>4</sup> And even his idea on inerrancy must be qualified by such statements as these: "When a contradiction occurs in Scripture, and it cannot be reconciled, so let it go;" and concerning acknowledged discrepancies and contradictions in

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<sup>1</sup> W. Sanday, Inspiration, pp. 42-43.

<sup>2</sup> C. F. H. Henry, The Protestant Dilemma. (quoting Luther: Werke) pp. 231-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>4</sup> Works of Martin Luther, Vol. VI. p. 489. Thus Marcus Dods appears to be justified in declaring: "Luther did not accept the Gospel because it was written in a book he believed to be inspired or canonical, or the Word of God; but he accepted it because it brought new life to his spirit and proved itself to be from God." Dods. Op. cit., p. 40.

Scripture, he said they were "of little consequence if the main facts of faith were fully grasped."<sup>1</sup>

To John Calvin the literal accuracy and infallibility of Scripture was a basic necessity of his entire theological framework.

"Calvin drew his whole theology then from Scripture. . . It was a fixed principle with him that he would not go beyond what the express teaching of Scripture authorised."<sup>2</sup>

He says:

"When that which professes to be the Word of God is acknowledged to be so, no person, unless devoid of common sense and the feelings of a man, will have the desperate hardihood to refuse credit to the speaker. But since no daily responses are given from heaven, and the Scriptures are the only records in which God has been pleased to consign his truth to perpetual remembrance, the full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognised, unless they are believed to have come from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them"<sup>3</sup>

However, Calvin honestly admits error in details.

"If there is no doubt that there is something wrong about the words of Scripture as they stand, Calvin suavely reminds you that after all it is not the words but the doctrine that is of prime concern. . . . When there was no other way out of a difficulty, Calvin proved ready to avail himself of the Higher Criticism of which Luther was an unblushing exponent. If the majesty of the Spirit of Christ was not to be seen in all parts of the Bible and some portions seemed 'out of the picture', an intrusion upon a harmonious and consistent volume of inspired truth, 'I regard it as a matter of religion utterly to reject every phrase which cannot be recognised as the genuine expression of the author.' (Pref. to 2 Peter)."<sup>4</sup>

What shall we say to these things? The main exponents of

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<sup>1</sup> A. Mitchell Hunter, The Teaching of Calvin, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. I, chap. VII, par. 1, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Hunter. Op. cit., pp. 77, 78.

the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture from the beginning seem to recognise problems, difficulties and errors in detail. The Reformation was the greatest single factor in bringing the Bible into, first, a position of unassailability, and then, a place where it was assailed from all sides. Brunner asserts:

"Luther was the first to represent a Biblical faith which could be combined with Biblical criticism, and was therefore fundamentally different from the traditional, formally authoritarian view of the Bible, which culminates in the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration." But "we must. . . admit that . . . the Reformers. . . retained the traditional. . . view of the Scriptures" alongside the new principle, and thus "helped the return to the old view."<sup>1</sup>

"The Protestant movement appealed to the right of private judgment, but its leaders shrank from the full consequences of that appeal. They went behind the Church to the classical documents of Christianity in the Scriptures, and found a final authority in them. All doctrines necessary to salvation were held to be there, and all dogmatic statements were presumed either to be derived from the Bible or at least to be proved from the Bible, so that it constituted the final court of appeal. The infallibility denied to the Pope and the Councils was attributed to the Bible in all its parts."<sup>2</sup>

In the 19th century the "Age of Reason" gave way to the Romantic era, but Rationalism found its fulfilment in unceasing, and in some cases bitter, attacks upon the Scriptures. Some attacked the prevailing doctrine of infallibility, some attacked the central dogmas of the faith, and others brilliantly and mercilessly waged a frontal assault on the Cornerstone. Much of this battle was fought in the name of freedom from restraint, some in the name of intellectual enlightenment, but a great part of the conflict was a real search for a deeper

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<sup>1</sup> Brunner: Christian Doctrine of God, pp. 111-112.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible, p. 9.



and more vital understanding of the essential truth of the Christian Faith. Further onsets were provided by interpretation of Darwin's doctrine of evolution and the tremendous progress of scientific discovery as well as the development of scientific methods of thought.

"In the case of the New Testament, the critical attack may be dated from the writings of F. C. Baur and his 'Tübingen School', beginning in 1831. This became an all-round attack on the integrity of the New Testament . . .

"Of the whole Tübingen theory of the Peter-Paul controversy not one shred is now accepted by responsible scholars; but it started a phase of criticism which for two generations dominated thought and practice, notably in Germany and Holland, but with repercussions in this country, where Germany was generally regarded as the leader in intellectual activity, in Biblical as well as in classical scholarship."<sup>1</sup>

#### Smeaton's Teaching on the Inspiration of the

##### Prophets and Apostles

All that Smeaton says on the subject of inspiration is in the face of the fullest knowledge by any British theologian of his time of the facts and efficiency of German Higher Criticism. The bulk of his writing on this doctrine is incorporated into his work on the Holy Spirit, and a brief review of the salient points follows.<sup>2</sup>

The first pertinent declaration could just as well have been written in 1952 as in 1882, although a marked increase in respect for authority

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, The Bible and Modern Scholarship, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton. Op. cit., pp. 146-174.

is being manifest to-day:

"The claim for the autonomy of the human mind in the field of theology, and an opposition to all authority, are marked features in the current opinions of the day. This is what is called modern thought; and I wish to survey it at the point where the unsettling current has been rushing in. The assumption of our day is that Revelation is to be restricted to the divine facts and words of the personal Redeemer, apart from any inspiration on the mind of those who composed the records; in other words, that the Historical Revelation is to be wholly isolated from the Biblical Revelation. This disjunction of the one from the other is, in fact, the centre-point of the new Theology, and it is at the widest remove from all Patristic and Protestant theology which leant on Theopneustic authority."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton treats inspiration "in connection with the supernaturally gifted Prophets and Apostles."<sup>2</sup> Two kinds of gifts were delineated in the Old and New Testament: ordinary saving gifts to all the people of God, and extraordinary gifts for official service. The Holy Spirit is the author of these supernatural or extraordinary gifts causing those prophets so endowed to recall Israel to their law, reprove the nation's vices, declare divine judgment, and to predict the incarnation, atonement and reign of the Messiah. The prophets ran only when the Holy Spirit sent them, and spoke or wrote only what the Holy Spirit told them to write or speak.

In the New Testament Church supernatural gifts were abundantly bestowed, but were manifested especially in the apostles as the special organs of Christ's revelation to the church. These miraculous gifts

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton. Op. cit., p. 147.



were temporary and ceased either after they had served their purpose, or were used for wrong purposes, such as ostentatious display. But these gifts, "especially THE GIFT OF TONGUES - that is, the gift of speaking in languages which had never been learned - were a conclusive proof and illustration that the miracle of inspiration was still present in the Church."<sup>1</sup> To Smeaton, speaking in tongues was the most remarkable of the gifts.<sup>2</sup> He felt, however, that the closing of the canon made continuation of these gifts unnecessary, as they had been given to accredit their possessors as true instruments of God's revelation.

Most modern theologians admit "inspiration" and also agree that the apostles were "true instruments of God's revelation," but such admission does not assure infallibility, nor would miraculous gifts be the test of accreditation.

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1 Smeaton. Op. cit., p. 150. Some believe to-day that the gift of tongues enabled speech in a tongue never learned. Many reject this as a very doubtful assumption. Bruce remarks: "The disciples, suddenly delivered from the peculiarities of their Galilean speech, praised God . . . in such a way that each hearer recognised with surprise his own native language or dialect." See F. F. Bruce: Acts, p. 82. Rackham in 1901 wrote: "It is commonly supposed that the apostles actually talked in different languages. . . and this is the prima facie impression given by the narrative." He then gives six strong arguments against this view. See R. B. Rackham: Acts. pp. 19-21.

2 Smeaton stresses this again in his preface to Chalmer's essay on inspiration. See Thomas Chalmers, Inspiration, Preface, p. 2.

"No unprejudiced mind could fail to recognise in the Bible manifest signs of the limitation and imperfection of the human authors which call for such critical approach. Only in the interest of a theory could they have been denied. If the Bible has authority as a revelation of truth it is in some sense which is not incompatible with its human imperfection."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Barth asserts:

"Therefore we do the Bible a poor honour, and one unwelcome to itself, when we directly identify it with this something else, with revelation itself."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Brunner believes:

". . . the real norm is the revelation, Jesus Christ Himself, who Himself witnesses to us through the Holy Spirit, who, however, in addition to this His self-revelation, makes use of the witness of the Apostles. . .

"The word of Scripture is not the final court of appeal, since Jesus Christ Himself alone is this ultimate authority; but even while we examine the doctrine of Scripture, we remain within the Scriptures, not, it is true, as an authority but as the source of all that truth which possesses absolute authority."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Smeaton says:

"The Holy Spirit supplied prophets and apostles, as chosen organs, with gifts which must be distinguished from ordinary grace, to give forth in human forms of speech a revelation which must be accepted as the word of God true in its whole contents, and as the authoritative guide for doctrine and duty."<sup>4</sup>

This is the "traditional theory" stated by Sanday:

"that the Bible as a whole and in all its parts was the Word of God, and as such that it was endowed with all the perfections of that Word. . . all parts of it were equally authoritative, and in history as well as in doctrine, it was exempt from error. . . Some kinds of error might be admitted and there might be no clear dividing line where these possibilities of

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1 C. H. Dodd. Op. cit., p. 18.

2 Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, p. 126.

3 Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God. (Dogmatics, Vol. I), p. 47.

4 Smeaton, Op. cit. p. 152.

error were to stop, but it would be agreed that they could not extend to anything of importance. They would belong chiefly to the sphere of the text; it might be allowed that the true text could not always be discovered; but when once it had been discovered it could not be otherwise than infallible.

"This was the view commonly held fifty years ago. And when it comes to be examined it is found to be substantially not very different from that which was held two centuries after the Birth of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Affirming this, Smeaton says,

"We proceed by a strictly inductive method. In the whole argument, which goes to establish the fact of a divine revelation as well as the genuineness, authenticity, and canonical authority of Scripture, nothing is assumed."<sup>2</sup>

Continuing his argument, Smeaton says that miracles immediately prove the truth of the doctrine and the inspiration of the messenger. Prophecy is a miracle of knowledge; the miracles of a physical nature are miracles of power. The test of a true prophet was that his predictions came to pass, many being fulfilled in his own life-time (Deuteronomy, 18:22). The Holy Spirit brought information to the remembrance of the apostles and also taught them new things, giving their statements and writings the authority of Christ Himself on the basis of His own word in Matthew, 10:40, which Smeaton renders, "He that heareth you heareth me."<sup>3</sup>

Inspiration has two aspects; one in historical fact and one in Word. The fact conveyed the revelation to the minds of the prophets and apostles - they conveyed it to the Church in

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<sup>1</sup> W. Sanday, Inspiration, pp. 392-393.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton. Op. cit., pp. 152-153.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 155. δεχομαι is given a different meaning from a versions of Matthew, 10:40 the author has read. While it can be used as meaning "give ear to," it is more likely to mean in this context and with a personal object in this case "to receive to hospitality." It seems that Luke 10:16 would be a better Scripture reference.

the Word. The Holy Spirit humbled Himself to give His message in words to fit human capacity, speech, and understanding, that this lofty message might easily pass into the speech of every nation on the globe's surface.

Smeaton then states the argument of German theology, taking its rise from Schleiermacher, that allows revelation in historic facts but denies "true Biblical revelation". Smeaton very correctly states the views of this school - and his remarks are echoed in the previously quoted statements of the modern authorities:

"The revelation, according to this theory, is not in the records at all, which, in fact, are correct and trustworthy just in proportion as the writers had access or had not access to reliable information, and who are by no means supposed to be exempt from the infirmities, mistakes, and even moral obliquities into which men, acting from ordinary motives, are betrayed."<sup>1</sup>

But only divine testimony, Smeaton avers, can assure us of a divine fact. The authority of the Old Testament was confirmed by a vast array of miracles and was accepted by the "Old Testament Church," Christ, and His apostles. New Testament authority rests on the word of Christ, that the Holy Spirit would give guidance to the apostles. This promise, Smeaton feels, is adequately conveyed in a number of Scripture passages showing that the Holy Spirit would give the apostles wisdom to know how and what to speak on every occasion, to recall words of Christ, and would instruct them, and give them power.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> The following are the passages quoted: Luke, 12: 12. "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." Also John, 14: 26, 15: 26, 16: 13-14.

Smeaton states the objection raised: that the men might have the Spirit, but the promise does not in so many words extend to their writings, only ordinary grace being promised. Smeaton answers that Jesus promised the guidance of the Spirit as often as needed by the apostles to give factual and doctrinal instruction, and the fact that the apostles prefixed their name and office to their epistles shows that they knew this. The theopneustic gift was permanent to them and applied to their writings as well as to their oral instruction. It must also be remembered that this promise was made to the disciples on the eve of their separation from Jesus, so He promised another Guide to take His place - surely much more than ordinary grace. Some say the inspiration of Bible writers is the same as that imparted to every Christian - to enlighten their minds to perceive objective revelation. Such a teaching identifies inspiration with illumination, but the Bible never does this, any more than it identifies the natural with the supernatural. The purpose of the Holy Spirit in conferring ordinary personal illumination is to enable sinful men to appropriate the grace of the Gospel; the object in conferring inspiration was official, to qualify prophets and apostles to deliver a divine communication "unmingled with foreign elements." The Old Testament prophets also were officially

commissioned, and so could say, "Thus saith the Lord."<sup>1</sup> The promise to the apostles went far beyond the idea of their being left to the exercise of their own wisdom, and the miracles were signs of plenary inspiration upon their minds. God's sovereignty is too often ignored by those who seek to merge ordinary and extraordinary gifts, but He speaks by chosen organs to His church, and attests this by direct communication of gifts.<sup>2</sup> So these two, inspiration and illumination cannot be identified as one. The apostles speak with the same authority as Christ.<sup>3</sup> Although we do not know and cannot know how the Holy Spirit did so, we know that He gave us supernatural revelation in human forms of speech. Smeaton clearly repudiates the dictation theory and also the "human illumination only" theory. He says, "The Scripture is the word of God, inspired throughout by the Spirit of God in every part, and given in human forms of expression. We must by no means maintain that the sacred writers were nothing but machines . . . it is better not to attempt to explain the inexplicable. . . . When Scripture stops, we stop."<sup>4</sup> A very

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<sup>1</sup> C. H. Dodd says: "In the end we do not believe the prophet because he says, 'Thus saith the Lord', with however great conviction and sincerity he says it, but for other reasons. . . ." C. H. Dodd. Op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, 3: 6. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Also Acts 9: 34. Smeaton's teaching on "illumination" is one of many evidences of his knowledge of the Patristics. See H. B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, pp. 384-385.

<sup>3</sup> Luke, 10:16. "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton. Op. cit., p. 168. A strange paradigm of orthodox complacency follows: "a contented nescience is better than a presumptuous knowledge." This reveals a reason for Smeaton's weakness as a thinker.



interesting analogy between the Living Word, Christ's Person, and the Written Word, both divine-human, serves as an apt illustration. He says, "I retain the miracle and the mystery."<sup>1</sup>

The principal issue is now grappled with in the sentence: "The theopneustic gift and Scripture are co-extensive." The currently prevailing theory then and now, is that God's word is the spiritual kernel of the Scripture husk, as gold is to quartz. Smeaton presents his two conclusive proofs against this in John, 10: 34-5:<sup>2</sup> that the word of God and Scripture are identical, and that what is written in the law was spoken by the mouth of God. Also Galatians, 3: 22 and Romans, 11:32<sup>3</sup> are used to show that "Scripture is represented as identical with the mouth of God Himself." The passages of Paul in I Corinthians 7, so often quoted to prove that Paul knew he was not always inspired, are dismissed with good explanations. Verse 6 gives Paul's permission and not his commandment to the Corinthians; verses 10-12 are quotations from Christ's own teaching while on earth, coupled with Paul's teaching, both equally inspired.<sup>4</sup> Smeaton concludes

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> John, 10:34-35. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken. . ."

<sup>3</sup> Galatians, 3:22. "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Romans, 11:32. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Neither of these really proves the theme sentence.

<sup>4</sup> I Corinthians, 7:6. "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." I Corinthians, 7:10-12. "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away."



that the Holy Spirit inspired the substance and form of the canonical books of Scripture. The word of God spoken and written has the same authority. "The peculiar properties of the sacred Scriptures, such as their sufficiency, perspicuity, certainty, perfection, and divine authority, are all derived from the fact that they were given by inspiration of God."<sup>1</sup> Smeaton's attitude toward this doctrine's importance is once again couched in these pertinent words:

"... the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures may be called a question of existence for the Protestant Church, which is not supported by that reserve power of tradition and of authority which gives coherence and strength to the Romish system. It is obvious that the Protestant Church cannot forego the authority of Scripture, or, which amounts to the same thing, permit it to be regarded as the word of man, without inevitable defeat and ruin."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore he is constantly referring to the danger of the theory of the Schleiermacher school, asserting "the unbridled autonomy of the human mind."<sup>3</sup>

Smeaton's concluding words in this section are that:

(1) The Holy Spirit testifies only through Scripture and not apart from it. (2) The reception of the supernatural inspiration of the Holy Spirit lays the foundation for all the authority of revelation. "Thus saith the Lord" demands submission. All true faith is from authority. The

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton. *Op. cit.*, p. 171. In a footnote on this page Smeaton defends the men who in the Helvetic formula "referred to the consonants and vowels of the Hebrew text as within the theopneustic element."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> The result is foreshadowed: "Thus a thorough-going improvement is only to be looked for when we utterly discard Old Testament proofs for specifically Christian doctrines, preferring to put aside what chiefly rests on such support." Schleiermacher. *Op. cit.*, p. 610.

"Christian Consciousness" is the authority in the school of Schleiermacher, and in Quakerism too; this proclaims the authority of the Spirit within rather than the Word by the Spirit without. This furnishes nothing but guesses at the truth, and is unfortunate and totally inadequate.

In a sermon<sup>1</sup> Professor Smeaton voices his compelling conviction that a preacher is an effective instrument only as he preaches the Word, God's message. The Holy Spirit uses the Word as His sword, and the preacher stands back and sees God work, "a worm linked to omnipotence, yet thrashing the mountains and beating them small," for the Word is the power of God. When "Christ crucified" is preached, God inhabits the Word and the Spirit comes in it with saving power as a mighty wind.

#### Criticism of Smeaton's Position

Smeaton's case for plenary inspiration is clear, consistent, but not conclusive. He believes in an infallible Scripture because he feels it just has to be, but also considers that he stands on solid ground, in the face of all that German theology can bring to bear to the contrary.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Smeaton. Sermons preached in the Free West Church, Aberdeen on Sabbath, 5th May, 1872, being the Sabbath after the Funeral of the Rev. Alex. D. Davidson, D.D., late Minister of that Church, pp. 12-14.

<sup>2</sup> Candlish shows the reasoning of his school of thought: "I say I cannot bring myself to believe that he left these men to write without a superintendence and unerring oversight that would secure the literal and verbal accuracy of every sentence they composed. . . . I will not do my God so great wrong as to imagine that he could so act. I may have to admit that there are difficulties. . . ." R. S. Candlish, Reason and Revelation, p. 71. When contemplating the discrepancy in New Testament quotations

He follows the Augustinian-Calvinistic line and the attitude of the Reformed theologians of his day, but he avoids excess. He contributes little that is new, although his view is important, not only as a basis for all his writing, but also because he recognises and puts his finger on the real point of divergence in the two schools even to this day.

Smeaton subscribed wholeheartedly to the following conception of inspiration stated in the Westminster Confession.<sup>1</sup> The present sixty-six books of the Bible are listed, followed by: "All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life." In section III, the Apocrypha are "not. . . of divine inspiration," so "are no part of the canon of the scripture." Later in section V: "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." This allows tremendous latitude, only slightly restricted in meaning by section VIII: "The Old Testament. . . of Old Testament passages, Candlish declares: "I am persuaded that the New Testament teachers felt themselves at liberty to deal with the Old Testament as freely as they did, solely because they were, and because they knew that they were, under the control and superintendence of the Spirit of Truth who would not suffer them to err." p. 82.

1 George Smeaton, National Christianity and Scriptural Union, p. 102.

and the New Testament . . . being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic."1 Marcus Dods remarks that the "Confession makes 'inspiration' the test of canonicity," but "says nothing of Prophetic and Apostolic authorship, but refers us to the various marks of divinity in the writings themselves."2 The Confession is surely not as rigid in its statements as Smeaton, but is much more conservative in intent than most modern theology.

It may be significant that Smeaton's book on the Holy Spirit was published in 1882, one year after the conclusion of the Robertson Smith case in 1881 which ended in the removal of Smith from the chair of Hebrew in Aberdeen because of his "radical" teaching concerning the authorship and composition of certain Old Testament books. This teaching was merely a limited application of German theological thought of the time; yet in spite of Smeaton's warnings, Norman Walker writes, "the suddenness of his [Smith's] attack upon our traditions . . . made it extremely natural that a very strong position should have been taken up."3 The Assembly of 1881 took this strong position, and Smeaton must have had this in mind as he finished his book. But Walker adds in retrospect: "If a man affirms that he believes in the

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1 Westminster Confession of Faith, pp. 3-5.

2 Marcus Dods. *Op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

3 Norman L. Walker, *Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland*, p. 290. For an account of the entire case see pp. 271-297.

inspiration of a book of Scripture, it will be difficult to prove that he contradicts the Confession of Faith by giving a novel account of its authorship or its composition."<sup>1</sup>

Before we conclude our consideration of inspiration, it seems pertinent to delineate some obvious weaknesses of Smeaton's position, and to mention one or two strong points that it might be well to re-examine to-day. One weakness is his persuasion that plenary inspiration must be held in order to maintain the existence of the Protestant church. This was an attitude of which Calvin was a first exponent, and the Reformed leaders of the 19th century even more avid followers. There is a fundamental fallacy in any doctrine taught only because it has to be in order to offset an opposing strong position, in this case as propounded by the Roman Catholic Church.

Another questionable emphasis concerns miracles in general, and in particular the gift of tongues as a substantiation of inspiration. We might well wonder whether an infallible Scripture, especially the New Testament, is an absolutely assured accompaniment of such a gift, great in effect, and demonstrative of the power of God as it was. Smeaton consistently appears to rest the entire weight of evidence as to inspiration on miracles, ascribing to them

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

far too great a burden of responsibility. The modern attitude tends to rest belief in miracles on a prior faith in Jesus Christ, and even Trench, long ago, said: "A miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass. . . . The purpose . . . being . . . to confirm that which is good." <sup>1</sup>

Concerning inspiration, Smeaton is unfortunately among those extreme Calvinists who were much more rigid than Calvin himself. His unquestionably great erudition was devoted to the one task of preserving the "status quo" against the attacks of the critics. R. C. Candlish expresses an attitude, typical of that period, and similar to Smeaton's:

"The Divine Spirit undertakes to so penetrate (sic) their minds and hearts, and so to guide them in the very utterance and recording of their sentiments, as to make what they say and write, when under his inspiration, the word of God in a sense not less exact than if with his own finger, he had graven it on the sides of the everlasting hills."<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton infers far too much when he applies the promises of Jesus given to the apostles concerning their future oral testimony or teaching, to their writings as well. Though their writings may well have been directed by the Spirit, there is not conclusive evidence that the apostles, themselves, would have traced this superintendence back to the promises of Jesus, nor are later readers fully justified in so doing.

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<sup>1</sup> Trench, Miracles, pp. 27, 29.

<sup>2</sup> R. S. Candlish, Reason and Revelation, p. 33.



Smeaton's deduction from Deuteronomy 18: 22, reveals superficial examination, for this text does not teach that a prophet's validity is tested by fulfilled prediction,<sup>1</sup> but rather that a false prophet can be detected by failure of his foretelling. A true prophet had many other more immediate confirmations, and his supreme responsibility was "forth-telling" much more than "foretelling." Fulfilled prediction is one of the tests used (as in the story of Micaiah, I Kings, 22: 7-28), but Smeaton's emphasis is not manifest in the works of the reform prophets. The ethical content of their authoritative preaching verified itself; no other test was needed.

On the other hand, the modern reaction against verbal inspiration has led to a tendency to minimize the direction and work of the Holy Spirit in making the Scriptures as a whole uniquely the Word of God. This attitude is exemplified by the following words:

"If we are to receive our Scriptures as absolutely authoritative, we have first to assent to the ground on which their authority rests. The doctrine of an equal and final authority stands, historically, upon the foundation of an equal and infallible inspiration. On no other foundation has it ever been supposed to stand. . . the doctrine of an inspiration that imparts infallibility and direct divine authority to the entire body of the Scripture is no more."<sup>2</sup>

Such views have contributed to elimination of the concept of

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton. Op. cit., p. 154. See in this connection the previous verse Deuteronomy, 18:21.

<sup>2</sup> W. N. Clarke, The Use of the Scriptures in Theology, pp. 24-26.



scriptural unity and power that Smeaton and others of his time believed with such telling effect. This needs to be recovered. A. H. Strong provides a welcome suggestion:

"Thought is possible without words, and in the order of nature precedes words. The Scripture writers appear to have been so influenced by the Holy Spirit that they perceived and felt even the new truths they were to publish, as discoveries of their own minds, and were left to the action of their own minds in the expression of these truths, with the single exception that they were supernaturally held back from the selection of wrong words, and when needful were provided with right ones. Inspiration is therefore not verbal . . .

"The Old Testament is part of a progressive system, whose culmination and key are to be found in the New. The central subject and thought which binds all parts of the Bible together, and in the light of which they are to be interpreted, is the person and work of Jesus Christ. . .

"When the unity of the Scripture is fully recognised, the Bible, in spite of imperfections in matters non-essential to its religious purpose, furnishes a safe and sufficient guide to truth and to salvation."

"The recognition of the Holy Spirit's agency makes it rational and natural to believe in the organic unity of Scripture. When the earlier parts are taken in connection with the later, and when each part is interpreted by the whole, most of the difficulties connected with inspiration disappear. Taken together, with Christ as its culmination and explanation, the Bible furnishes the Christian rule of faith and practice." <sup>1</sup>

With the information now available, Smeaton might well have found himself at home with some of the evangelical world of to-day that accepts: (1) minor errors in unimportant details, (2) the idea of progressive revelation (3) the doctrine that it is the original manuscripts that were accurate. But his outlook would never have allowed for Higher Criticism even a modicum of trustworthiness; therefore

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<sup>1</sup> A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology, pp. 216-218.

he could never have found the thrilling new fields of Biblical exploration that have opened up as a result. This perspective of conservation is reflected in his entire teaching but is accepted only in the more fundamental circles to-day. But if this is recognised and allowance made, it still appears that as a great scholar and Christian, he made a partial approach to the new developments:

"With the most inflexible adherence to orthodox doctrine, we are not slow to admit that much of what is adventitious in phraseology, and form, and mode of development must pass away. Ages of mere resuscitation accomplish nothing. No human thing, when it expires, can be given back; and even forms of thought and modes of setting truth, so far as they are human, when they cease to be breathed as living realities, can never be revived. This is the law impressed by the living Lord on all transitory things. Nor do we wish it otherwise. The Bible alone can be reproduced in immortal youth and undecaying freshness; and its amaranthine colours can never pass away."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Smeaton, The Basis of Christian Doctrine in Divine Fact, p. 22.

## CHAPTER III

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### DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Smeaton has much to say about the doctrine of election, and although he follows the main trend of thought from Augustine through Calvin connected with Reformed theology,<sup>1</sup> this doctrine must now be discussed as it relates to and qualifies his thought, especially concerning the doctrines of the atonement and the Holy Spirit.

#### Election and Atonement

In Smeaton's theology the atoning work of Christ was definitely limited to the elect.

"The Lord's sayings. . . indicate that they for whom it [the atonement] was offered and accepted, were the persons who had been given to Him, and to whom He had united Himself in the eternal covenant."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore the effects of the atonement coincide with its extent. The atonement is the counterpart of the fall, and reverses the curse, for the elect; it procures and assures saving benefits for all Christians.

Smeaton firmly believes that the following Scriptures teach that the benefits are only to be applied to a select

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<sup>1</sup> George Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Atonement, Vol. I. p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 312-313. See Thomas J. Crawford, The Doctrine of Holy Scripture Respecting the Atonement, pp. 189-193 for confirmatory evidence.

group: (1) He gave His life for many, and His blood was shed for many (not all).<sup>1</sup> (2) He lays down His life for His sheep.<sup>2</sup> The "sheep" are the elect,<sup>3</sup> the ones who believe in Him. (3) He shall save His people from their sins;<sup>4</sup> "His people" includes both Jew and Gentile who have been given to Him already by God.<sup>5</sup> (4) He died for the Hebrew nation and for the "children of God scattered abroad,"<sup>6</sup> looking ahead to the rest of the elect as if they were "already the foreappointed children of God."<sup>7</sup> He shows His love by laying down His life for His friends.<sup>8</sup> This love "not only procures salvation but also applies it. This special love wins its object, finds its object, and rescues it."<sup>9</sup> This love, infinite in value, only applies to those who accept it and believe.

Smeaton states his reasons for repudiating three universalist theories: (a) Atonement will finally save all men. Restoration is co-extensive with ruin. Such doctrine, originally propounded by Origen, seems

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1 Matthew, 20:28. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew, 26:28. "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Smeaton very seldom uses Mark, and the conclusions of the critics that Mark, 10:45 and 14:24 are the source texts for these quotations from Matthew would not be known to him.

2 John, 10:14-15.

3 John, 10:26. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."

4 Matthew, 1:21.

5 John, 6:37. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

6 John, 11:51-52. "And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

7 Smeaton. Op. cit., p. 318.

8 John, 15:13.

9 Smeaton. Op. cit., p. 318.

logically consistent, but it is non-scriptural and overlooks divine justice. (b) The Arminian school makes the atonement co-extensive with the human family and possible to all. Reconciliation and eternal life are given to all who obey Christ and persevere to the end. This is legalistic and unscriptural. (c) Invitation is for all; therefore there must be universal provision. Smeaton condemns this as muddled thinking, asserting there must be concurrence in all three parties concerned to complete the atonement, Father, Surety, and the man needing salvation. "The exercise of faith on the sinner's part must be viewed as his approval of this method of salvation, and his consent to it."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton insists that Christ's teachings cited below devastate these theories, as He manifests the true nature of the atonement in the light of the original covenant with God. (1) Christ and His seed are viewed as one. He is the head and His own are the body.<sup>2</sup>

(2) "The purchase of redemption and its application are co-extensive. The salvation is not won for any to whom it is not applied. All our Lord's sayings assume this, and take it for granted (John, 10:15). To suppose the opposite, would imply that a costly price had been paid, and that those for whom it was paid derived no advantage from it; which could only be on the ground that He wanted either love or power."<sup>3</sup>

(3) Christ's intercession is based on the atonement, and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> John, 6:39. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton. Op. cit., p. 323. John 10:15 presents exceedingly obscure substantiation for such an all-inclusive deduction.

He intercedes only for His own.<sup>1</sup> Constantly He loves His own,<sup>2</sup> is incarnate for His own.<sup>3</sup> Thus His own become identified with Him in co-suffering (I Peter, 4:1), co-crucifixion (Galatians, 2:20), co-dying (Romans, 6:8), co-burying with Christ (Romans, 6:4) etc.

Smeaton carefully explains the following instances in the New Testament where reference seems to be more universal. In Romans, 8:32, the Son being delivered for "us all" indicates in its context (28-32) the true Church and the "us" refers to all believers.<sup>4</sup> In II Corinthians, 5:14-15 in the expression "Christ died for all," he considers that the "all" refers to the "us" whom the love of Christ constrains, or the elect.<sup>5</sup> When in I Timothy, 2:6 we read that "Christ gave Himself a ransom for all" this "all" refers to "all conditions, ranks, classes and nationalities without distinction."<sup>6</sup> The clue is in the first verse of I Timothy 2 where 'kings and all in authority' are specifically mentioned. The "allusion is not to all men numerically," and here, as if aware that his position is not particularly strong at this point, Smeaton seeks to bulwark his argument by frequent re-statement, as well as by appeal to Augustine, Ames, Trigland

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1 John, 17:9, 20, 24.

2 John, 13:1.

3 Hebrews, 2:13-17.

4 Smeaton. Vol. II. Op. cit., p. 183.

5 Ibid., pp. 209-213.

6 Ibid., pp. 324-325.



and other anti-Arminian writers. In II Peter, 2:1<sup>1</sup> some difficulty is caused by the phrase referring to the false teachers who "bring in heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them."<sup>2</sup> Professor Smeaton admits:

"This passage, considered in the light of an efficacious atonement securing the redemption of the true church (Acts, 20:28), is not without its difficulties, and is variously expounded; being the passage, in fact, in which the Lutheran and Arminian polemical writers uniformly intrench themselves and defy assault."<sup>3</sup>

He eliminates one weak explanation that this passage does not refer to Christ; and finally comes to rest in the principle that these

"... false teachers are described according to their own profession and the judgment of charity. They gave themselves out as redeemed men, and were so accounted in the judgment of the church while they abode in her communion. This is simple and natural. The passage by no means affirms that any but the true church or the sheep of Christ are truly bought by atoning blood."<sup>4</sup>

One of the best Bible passages on election is in

I Peter, 1:1-2<sup>5</sup> in which election is described

"from a threefold point of view: its source in divine foreknowledge; the mode in which it is carried out by sanctification of the Spirit; and the end

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1 II Peter, 2:1. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

2 Ibid., pp. 446-447.

3 Ibid., p. 446.

4 Ibid., p. 447.

5 I Peter, 1:2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace unto you and peace, be multiplied."



contemplated, viz. obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ. The obedience here named is but another name for faith, or, more strictly, for that obedience of faith which submits to the righteousness of God."<sup>1</sup>

This refers to the Old Testament ritual in which "to sprinkle, and to absolve from guilt are co-incident."<sup>2</sup> Christ's blood makes atonement for the elect, and this atonement preceded and is presupposed by sprinkling.

"The apostle represents the blood of Christ as sacrificial, a meaning which the word usually bears. This passage limits the sprinkling to persons, without noticing the other sprinkling, more objective in its character, applied to the altar of burnt-offering (Lev. 1:5), to the veil of the sanctuary (Lev. 5:6), and to the mercy-seat on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:14). . . .

"Possibly, as has been conjectured, Peter only reproduces the ideas which he had heard from the lips of his Lord at the institution of the Supper (Matt. 26:28). The blood shed for many, or sprinkled, as some choose rather to view it, was not only for the remission of sins, but for the institution of the new covenant, replacing that of Sinai. . . . Christians . . . become a people of God by the sprinkling of Christ's blood."<sup>3</sup>

In the very fine historical appendix to Smeaton's second volume of the Atonement, he quotes Polycarp's Circular Epistle of the Church of Smyrna to point out that "Christ . . . suffered for the salvation of the saved."<sup>4</sup> Augustine and Ambrose as well as Prosper stress that there are two worlds, redeemed and unredeemed, and that Christ saves the redeemed out of the world. "Christ was crucified

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1 Ibid., p. 421.

2 Exodus, 29:21. Numbers, 19:13; Psalm, 51:7.

3 Smeaton. Ibid., pp. 422-423.

4 Smeaton. Ibid., pp. 482-483.



for those only to whom His death was made available." Atonement was never for mankind indiscriminately.<sup>1</sup> Aquinas also proclaimed this doctrine<sup>2</sup> as did Calvin and the Reformed Church, but Lutherans held to universality of expiation.<sup>3</sup>

Numerous references throughout the gospels to the "select group" seem to qualify Smeaton's arguments as well founded. However, in every phase of the argument, the "many" or "His own" could apply on an Arminian basis to those who respond on the basis of faith, and who become, accordingly "His sheep" or "His people". Theologians to-day are still divided into many groups on this doctrine, but not many in Britain accept the extreme view of Smeaton and his contemporaries. The Calvinist theory is "consistent", as Smeaton claims, but does not cover the New Testament witness in spite of Smeaton's erudite endeavour to explain difficult passages by interpretative assumptions, and Candlish's far more expansive and intellectually potent arguments that permeate his book on the atonement.<sup>4</sup> Most theologians reject universal salvation,<sup>5</sup> but a great number hold that a universal possibility and at least an underlying universal provision involved in

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1 Ibid., pp. 506-507.

2 Ibid., p. 524.

3 Ibid., p. 530.

4 Robert S. Candlish, The Atonement. See especially pp. 47-85.

5 C. H. Dodd thinks Paul teaches its possibility in Romans, 11:32. (See C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, pp. 183-186.)

a universal call is taught by Scripture. Even Smeaton, when demanding three-party concurrence to avoid "confused" thinking allows human "approval" and "consent" "indispensably necessary" to finish the transaction.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to avoid doubt concerning the complete validity of the "limited atonement" verdict so confidently proclaimed.

In addition it is hard to justify a fixed, predetermined group alongside a universal invitation with the promise that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts, 2:21). It would not seem to be a sincere universal invitation and promise. The answer appears to be found in retrospective comprehension which avoids a sense of fatalism combined with complacency.

### Election and the Holy Spirit.

In Smeaton's book on the Holy Spirit the doctrine of election becomes somewhat more rigid. The natural man without the Holy Spirit does not receive the atonement or the gospel, and cannot know them.<sup>2</sup> The Cross and spiritual things are foolishness to him. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith,<sup>3</sup> but faith is not given to all, does not belong to all.<sup>4</sup> He takes away every hindrance and obstruction, persuades the judgment, and "gently binds the will" of the elect. The atonement was finished when Christ died,

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1 Smeaton, Vol. I. Op. cit., pp. 321-322.

2 Smeaton, Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 67.

3 II Corinthians, 4:13.

4 II Thessalonians, 3:2.

but the Holy Spirit must apply that completed work.

"The efficacious operation of the Spirit presupposes God's sovereign love to individuals, or a personal election."<sup>1</sup>

The saving efficacy of the Holy Spirit has a special destination.

"They who interpret the divine word by the primary axiom that all men must share alike, and who impugn the absolute right of God to bestow salvation as men bestow their alms on whom He will by a purely free donation, forget, in their anxiety to be on a friendly footing with the spirit of the age, that the advantage which their theory seems to gain by enlarging the extent of God's love is more than counter-balanced at another point - by lack of efficacy. God's love finds out its objects. It is something far other than a mere benevolent but inefficacious desire in the divine mind which wishes, but does not potentially will, the salvation of men."<sup>2</sup>

Alone men are impotent for good, showing

"... first, their want of the Spirit and of all spiritual life; secondly, a subjection to the kingdom of sin and Satan; and thirdly, a voluntary aversion to God and rebellion against Him. This suggests a three-fold corresponding inquiry: first, how is the forfeited presence of the Spirit restored to the human heart, and what effects accompany His return? secondly, how are the effectually called translated from the family of Satan into the state of adopted sons? and thirdly, how is corrupted nature fully changed and made meet here and hereafter for the love and service of God?"<sup>3</sup>

The forfeited presence of the Holy Spirit is restored by the atonement. Man has free agency, but in his natural state always chooses evil in preference to good because his will is diseased.<sup>4</sup> Education refines but cannot give life.

There must be regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the elect

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1 Smeaton. Ibid., p. 175.

2 Ibid., pp. 175-176.

3 Ibid., p. 176.

4 Ibid., p. 181.

are those who are regenerated.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit anticipates the will and works in us to will a return to God, and each succeeding step in spiritual growth. "Application of redemption is from first to last by the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup> Smeaton says that the only alternative to this truth will result in a Church's descent to naturalism. The Wesleyan system was saved by holding to this truth of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> There is no interference with human liberty when we receive the work of the Son to redeem and justify us, and the work of the Holy Spirit to regenerate us.

Thus the effectually called become adopted sons and are translated by the Holy Spirit from the family of Satan into the family of God.<sup>4</sup> The universal Fatherhood of God is not a Biblical concept. The Holy Spirit is the Author of adoption<sup>5</sup> and brings the Christian before God as the child to a Father. We are made sons by grace in regeneration, for Christ is a Son by nature,<sup>6</sup> and the Holy Spirit makes our sonship clear to us.<sup>7</sup>

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1 Ibid., p. 198.

2 Ibid., p. 202.

3 It is very possible that the comparative decay and loss of power of the Methodist church in latter years has been partially due to its losing that great truth and assuming the alternative.

4 Smeaton. Ibid., p. 206.

5 Romans, 8:15. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

6 John, 1:13; I John, 3:1.

7 Romans, 8:16. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God:" This is the doctrine of assurance and is intended to be an important benefit of the doctrine of election. Smeaton. Doctrine of the Holy Spirit p. 211.

Smeaton asserts that the Synod of Dort which met from November 13, 1618 to May 9, 1619 was historically the council where the best work on the question of election was consummated. "Its great point was to show that the Spirit produces all, and man acts all."<sup>1</sup> The following summary of the pertinent articles show this Synod's development of the doctrine: Article 8 - All whom the gospel calls are unfeignedly called. Article 9 - It is not the fault of the gospel, Christ or God that those called refuse to be converted. It is the fault of man himself. Article 10 - Those who heed and obey the call do so by God's choosing and power, not by their own free-will. Article 11 - The Holy Spirit illuminates the mind, gets to the centre of man, opens his heart, changes his will and nature and makes him a good tree that produces good fruit. Article 12 - God works regeneration in us without our aid; this is irresistible so man believes and repents by grace. Article 13 - The manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit cannot be understood in this life. Article 14 - Faith is a gift of God conferred upon man. God produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.

Relating the doctrine of election to the Church, Smeaton says it is a corporate society in communion with Christ animated by the Holy Spirit.

"The Church. . . came into existence in virtue of the election of the Father, the redemption of the Son,

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton. Ibid., pp. 358-361.



and the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. How closely the Spirit is connected with that living organism - its functions, office-bearers, sacraments, gifts, and ordinances - will appear when we call to mind that He creates it by His life-giving agency, sustains and supports it in its functions, infuses life, unction, and ability for the exercises by which the members edify and comfort one another, and without whom it could neither exist nor cohere. By the Holy Spirit every true member of the Church is consciously joined to the Head; and the several members are held together rather by inward than by outward bonds."<sup>1</sup>

### Other Views on Election

Smeaton's teaching on election is pre-eminently orthodox as is all of his doctrine. He maintains the traditional views established by Augustine and Calvin, but it is significant that, as a whole, he avoids the extremes to which they allowed themselves to go. He never once mentions reprobation, and thus to that extent at least his position would be acceptable to Dr. Brunner and others, today.<sup>2</sup> Smeaton is entirely positive in his outlook, differing radically from his associates, and to him the doctrine of election is a tremendous source of joy and assurance to the Christian even as it was to Calvin.<sup>3</sup> His solid position is held in contradistinction

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 262-263. Ritschl maintained that election applied only to the Church as a whole: "The . . . error . . . consists in this, that . . . the community of the elect . . . are represented as sums of individuals. . . All the . . . expressions of the apostles on this subject (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:1) refer to the community as a whole. Eternal election of individuals is neither a Biblical idea nor a religious conception . . . Eternal predestination of individuals to salvation . . . is altogether contrary to reason." (Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation. Vol. III. Second edition, pp. 121-2). (See footnote 1, page 54).

<sup>2</sup> Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt, pp. 76-77 also Our Faith, pp. 35-36.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, Institutes, Vol. II, Bk. III, Chap. 21, Par. 1, p. 202.



to four alternative views on this great question: (1) the doctrine of double predestination, begun by Augustine,<sup>1</sup> accepted by Aquinas,<sup>2</sup> and expounded fully by Calvin.<sup>3</sup> (2) The doctrine of universal grace held by Arminius, and subtly held by Amyraldus<sup>4</sup> whom Jonathan Edwards followed,<sup>5</sup> which declared that Christ died for all, and thus He "made God placable and man salvable, but did not actually procure reconciliation for any."<sup>6</sup> Smeaton felt that this system, as variously held by its devotees was incoherent.<sup>7</sup> (3) The doctrine of conditional election which has implicit in it the two principles that the election may be rejected, and that we are elect for service.<sup>8</sup> (4) The doctrine of universal election or universal restoration, ἀποκατάστασις which began with Origen<sup>9</sup> and seems to

1 Emil Brunner. The Christian Doctrine of God, (Dogmatics, Vol. I), p. 340. "Before Augustine there was no doctrine of Predestination."

2 A. C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II pp. 278-279.

3 John Calvin, Institutes, Vol. II, Bk. III, Chap. 21-24.

4 Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 361.

5 Ibid., p. 381.

6 Smeaton. Atonement, Vol. II, p. 537. A. Cave simply says: "The New Testament teaches that Christ died for all men. (John, 3:16, Rom. 5:15, II Cor. 5:14-15, I John, 2:2)" (Alfred Cave, The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice and Atonement, p. 319).

7 Ibid., p. 541.

8 H. H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election. These are the two main themes of this very interesting book in which the author builds a firm basis for his doctrine by reference to Israel as the Old Testament church, and ample illustration of how election was accepted and rejected by nation and individual. Smeaton would not have accepted this doctrine for it is fundamentally Arminian. Brunner seems to hold this position.

9 McGiffert. Op. cit., p. 181. Also Brunner, Christian Doctrine of God, pp. 352-3.

have come to a culmination in the teaching of Karl Barth in spite of his emphasis on total depravity.<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton gives God all glory, especially for the Holy Spirit's supreme work. Man is hopeless apart from election, and yet the negative aspect is not emphasized;<sup>2</sup> Smeaton's teaching is, as a whole, Biblical, consistent, coherent and reasonable, but the greatest fallacy, it seems to the writer, is the insistence that the atonement must be efficacious in procuring as well as providing salvation for all for whom it was intended. Smeaton says:

"They who plead for an indefinite atonement make the whole a completed transaction, without man's consent; and we are at a loss to see what conceivable advantage can be gained by making the atonement wider than the number of those that approve of it, and are willing to be saved by it."<sup>3</sup>

Another weakness of Smeaton concerns the corporate view of election, emphasized by Ritschl in such a one-sided manner.<sup>4</sup> Only in one place, does Smeaton mention

1 Karl Barth. Kirchliche Dogmatik, Vol. II.2, p. 182. "Verworfen ist ja nicht der Mensch." p. 552 "dass auch die Verworfenen tatsächlich in diesem Lichte stehen." [of election.] See also Brunner. Ibid., pp. 348-349.

2 Dr. Brunner inserts the independence of man into this picture, and in so doing broadens its scope, and satisfies many hearts, but he also insists that election is at the heart of the gospel. "It is God's grace alone. His mercy, His boundless love, His election alone is the basis of my salvation. That is a Christian's greatest joy. . . . When a man knows that his name is written in the Book of Life, in the Book of Election, he knows whence comes the peace that passes all understanding. He has then climbed the highest mountain of faith, and there remains then in this life nothing higher than the preservation and the operation of this greatest, most glorious discernment. . . . The elect in themselves are only 'them that believe'. And believers are those who in their hearts 'have become obedient to the word of God'. Election dawns upon no one except in the full, independent, obedient and trustworthy decision of faith." Brunner, Our Faith, pp. 34-35.

3 Smeaton, Atonement, Vol. I. Op. cit., p. 322.

4 See footnote 1, p. 57.

the "elect church" (see footnote 1, page 57), and no clear reference is made to Israel as the Old Testament Church finding fulfilment in the New Testament Church, although Smeaton surely believes this doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Brunner gives a lucid explanation of the election of Israel to represent humanity, for the sake of humanity:

"Israel experienced its election as an historical event (Deuteronomy, 14:2). . . Israel knows itself to be wholly dependent upon the grace of the One who has chosen her, and that she ought to live in this attitude of continual dependence. . . As the election of Israel to a covenant-relation with God constituted an obligation to service. . . and since the whole unique ethos of the people of the Old Covenant is based upon this election, so the election in Jesus Christ constitutes the foundation of the special ethos of the Christian Church."<sup>2</sup>

This is the same truth taught by Dr. H. H. Rowley at much greater length, and both of these men apply it splendidly to the individual and show the possibilities of national and individual rejection.

The concept of beholding the glory of election only from the standpoint of Christian retrospection is never mentioned by Smeaton, and to the author, this is the capstone of the present-day position. Otto states it aptly :

"The idea of 'election' . . . is an immediate and pure expression of the actual religious experience of grace. The recipient of divine grace feels and knows. . . that he has not grown into his present self, through any

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1 Smeaton, Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, pp. 274-276.

2 Brunner, Christian Doctrine of God, pp. 310-312.

achievement or effort of his own, and that, apart from his own will or power, grace was imparted to him, grasped him, impelled and led him. . . . Before every deed of his own, he sees love the deliverer in action, seeking and selecting, and acknowledges that an eternal gracious purpose is watching over his life.<sup>1</sup>

In a lecture the writer attended at New College, Edinburgh, Professor Stewart said in connection with Paul's attitude to his own call:

"The doctrine of election is experimental and not speculative. . . . It is the manifestation of eternal love anchored in the eternal purpose of God. The doctrine of election has no bearing on the non-Christian. It is only understood from a Christian viewpoint, and arises from Christian men contemplating their own experience."<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton's joy in the doctrine must have been the result of such contemplation. It is unfortunate that he does not express these facets of the doctrine.

Understanding, then, Smeaton's presuppositions of an infallible Scripture and an atonement applied by the Holy Spirit only to the elect, we enter into a presentation and discussion of the central doctrine of Smeaton's theology, and the Christian faith, the doctrine of atonement.

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Otto. The Idea of the Holy, (tr. by J. W. Harvey) p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpts from the lecture of December 4, 1951.

## CHAPTER IV

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### THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

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#### Preliminary Observations

In the Reformed Presbyterian Magazine of March 1869, the reviewer of Smeaton's first volume on the atonement states that there are three methods of investigating and discussing doctrines of the Christian faith: dogmatic presentation, historical analysis and Biblical and exegetical analysis and synthesis. Smeaton led the way in using the last method in presenting the doctrine of the atonement.<sup>1</sup> Another reviewer says that this first volume is a solid argument against "Christian Consciousness"<sup>2</sup> for it meets those who espouse this view on their own ground; Smeaton argues only from the gospels. His work "does not build up a system; it gives us materials to build with. He, like a wise man, has built his house on a rock; one can find repose and rest here."<sup>3</sup> Smeaton pursues well-worn paths of Christian faith in a way conducive to assurance and peace of mind for the conservative believer, for he gives scholarly backing to accepted orthodox doctrine, but he does not really wrestle with the problems posed by the European liberals of his day. Another critic said: "We regard this book as a very valuable contribution to the theological literature of our day."<sup>4</sup> The Reformed

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1 Reformed Presbyterian Magazine, 1869-70, Mr. 1, 1869. pp. 112-116.

2 The phrase expresses the teaching of those who follow Schleiermacher's system of thought.

3 British and Foreign Evangelical Review, Vol. XVII, July 1868, pp. 650-657

4 Princeton Review, 1868, p. 633.

approach of his day to the atonement is suggested by the approving notice about Smeaton's second volume found in the Princeton Review:

"The Apostles set forth an Atonement that is not merely didactic, exemplary, symbolical, or governmental in its nature, but is also strictly piacular, vicarious, penal, in satisfaction of divine justice, involving the imputation of the sins of the redeemed to Christ, and of his righteousness to them."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton insists that the atonement is vicarious and penal, and presents considerable proof for his contention by cumulative scriptural evidence; but his introduction proclaims that he comes to his task with no preconceived prejudices. He says:

"My task in this work has been simply to determine, by strict exegetical investigation, the import of Christ's words, and to reproduce His thoughts by the exact interpretation of language. I have no other desire than to ascertain what he did say, and to abide by it; and the principle on which alone it is safe to carry on investigations into doctrine on any point, is, I am fully persuaded, to go to the Scriptures, not for the starting-point of thought alone, but for the substance of thought as well, or for the rounded and concrete development of the doctrine in all its elements: and these will be found in Christ's sayings, if we but patiently investigate them."<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton asserts that Christ's own sayings will be accepted by many who are sincerely seeking for true understanding, and they will correct faulty ideas of the atonement. Even though Jesus does not speak often of His atonement, for His disciples were not prepared to understand Him, what He does say gives a complete knowledge of the doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Princeton Review, 1871, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> George Smeaton, Doctrine of the Atonement as Taught by Christ Himself, Vol. I. Preface p. vi.

<sup>3</sup> Mozley says of the German liberals of all types of Smeaton's time: "But on one thing there was general agreement: Jesus was no dogmatist, and the Christian Church had greatly erred in trying to find support for her doctrines, about atonement as about other things, in the words of Jesus. Paul..... was the originator of such doctrines." Mozley: The Doctrine of the Atonement, p. 33.



Smeaton considers the epistles an elaboration on the sayings of our Lord by His apostles, and a resultant building up of a stronger, clearer message because understanding has now come to these devoted men. This second volume manifests how the apostles have received specific new instruction on the atonement from the risen Lord,<sup>1</sup> and with the "aid of the Holy Spirit" have written records of the real meaning of that event which had previously been to them an incomprehensible mystery. They regard the atonement as an accomplished fact, eternally valid. They had been repelled by the thought of Christ's death, but, in a new world of thought and feeling, His death became the foundation of all their preaching. Real "Christian Consciousness" was most pure in the apostles, and as a result they are the "organs of Christ's Self-revelation to the Church."<sup>2</sup> Smeaton says the record in the epistles is Christ's own teaching through the apostles, who expanded and freely applied it, and thus sealed the atonement as the central article of Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Atonement Is Vicarious

The overwhelming emphasis and the central core of Smeaton's entire teaching on the atonement is that Jesus Christ is our substitute on the cross, taking our sin upon Him, suffering punishment that we deserved, incurring the just wrath of God, thereby redeeming all who believe and accept His sacrifice, i.e. all who are elect. Smeaton was the first one<sup>4</sup> who "traversed the whole field" of the atonement in the whole New Testament from a detailed biblico-exegetical approach and there is no doubt that any

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24:25-27, 45-47.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Atonement, Vol. II, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton did not in any way show that he was aware of the fact that the epistles were written before the gospels.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 8.

bias in his work is sincerely unintentional.<sup>1</sup> Smeaton's teaching was typical of the conservative British thinking of this time, and as a proponent of the "modified Hyper-Calvinist view" he was in the fellowship of such good and godly men as R. S. Candlish, Dewar, Hugh Martin, R. W. Dale, Crawford (who finished a similar work on the atonement shortly after Smeaton),<sup>2</sup> and the Hodges in United States.

Ransom  
passage

Smeaton often came to his strongest conclusions on philological grounds, and this is an important factor in his doctrine of substitution. The ransom passage in Matthew, 20:28 has the Greek word ἀντὶ as the preposition, and this distinctly means "in place of, in room of, in the stead of."<sup>3</sup> Many passages use the word ὅτι, (John, 10:11, 13) and Smeaton says: "The phrase indisputably means 'for their benefit, for their good.' Nor must it be omitted, that when the clause in which this expression occurs, denotes 'instead of' - which it frequently does - this latter is to be regarded as rather involved in the nature of the transaction, than derived from the preposition itself."<sup>4</sup>

J. K. Mozley says: "As to substitution, the conception is imbedded in St. Paul's writings, and cannot be got rid of by appeals to points in

1 Ibid., p. 4. "The object steadily kept in view has been to determine what saith the scripture - according to rigid principles of grammatico-historical interpretation - without dislocating or wresting, so far as I am aware, a single expression from its true significance, and thus to run up the matter to authority."

2 Thomas J. Crawford, D.D., The Doctrine of the Holy Scripture Respecting the Atonement.

3 Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 151.

4 Ibid., p. 275. Also see T. J. Crawford, The Atonement, pp. 18-24 and 471-473.

the phraseology such as the use of ὑπὲρ not αὐτῷ in 2 Cor. 5:12 and other places to describe the effect of Christ's death. Baur insists that ὑπὲρ contains the idea of substitution as well as that of something done in the interest of men; the ideas are 'constantly passing over into each other, and present in each other.'<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton emphasizes many times that a ransom is a price for the redemption (not the redemption itself) of people, not things, and not due to any merit on the part of those redeemed. Jesus gave His life as the price of our deliverance from death and punishment. Some seek to eliminate the reality of the substitution by forcing the "giving" to be a communication of inner life, but this is completely contrary to the language and obvious meaning of the passage. Others translate the word as "discharged" or "delivered" (as redeemed prisoners of war). This vitiates meaning and content of Scripture, says Smeaton.

The word λύτρον (ransom), can never mean sacrifice or "deliverance without a price." Its meaning in the classics is: "A price paid to deliver a prisoner from captivity," and to Smeaton this is clear substitution. One principal reason for the rebellion against the substitutionary doctrine is the assumption that a satisfaction to divine justice is absurd. But Smeaton answers that this is what the Scripture clearly teaches.<sup>2</sup> "The ransom changes the entire relation of the Christian to everything in the moral government of God."<sup>3</sup> For the Christian there is no sting in death, no curse in physical evil, only fatherly discipline and education.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Mozley, The Doctrine of the Atonement, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 5:2. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." Hebrews 9:14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Op. Cit., p. 165.

<sup>4</sup> D. M. Baillie, God Was in Christ, p. 168. "If a man's sins are forgiven, that is an end of them; and now the suffering they have left as their legacy is simply part of his lot, a divine discipline perhaps, but not a divine punishment."

Many scholars exclude all of the ransom teaching by excising these verses (Matt. 20:28, Mark 10:45) on the assumption that they are ecclesiastical or doctrinal additions by a later hand. Rashdall<sup>1</sup> goes to some length to try to prove these sayings not genuine. Pfleiderer, Wrede, Loisy and others agree with Rashdall on this point. The arguments of these writers are not at all convincing, and Prof. Vincent Taylor marvels that Rashdall's "cavalier treatment" of Mark 10:45 has been accepted without question by so many.<sup>2</sup> James Denney says concerning these verses: "The words are perfectly in place. They are in line with everything that precedes...A theological aversion to them may be conceived, but otherwise there is no reason whatever to call them in question. There is no critical evidence against them, and their psychological truth is indubitable."<sup>3</sup> Present day commentators generally accept these verses as genuine.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus is our sin-bearing, curse-bearing Messiah.

Jesus, according to the testimony of John the Baptist, is the Lamb of God which beareth the sin of the world.<sup>5</sup> Smeaton declares that this refers not to any particular "lamb" sacrifice but to all of them; sin-offering, burnt-offering (daily offering for sin), and trespass offering (for specific sin), all to gain legal purification from ceremonial defilement. But Jesus took away all sin by bearing it. A. B. Bruce in two pointed passages clarifies this belief: "Without a doubt, it was the instinctive impulse of the Redeemer to impute to Himself the world's sin, and in the light of such imputation, to regard the evils of His earthly lot as a personal participation in the curse pronounced on man for sin." "It will be found difficult

1 Hastings Rashdall: The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology, pp. 29-36, 49-58.

2 V. Taylor, Jesus and His Sacrifice, pp. 99-105.

3 Denney: Death of Christ, p. 28.

4 Interpreters Bible, Vol. 7, p. 497, esp. 818.

5 John, 1:29. Hoskyns says: "The Greek word is used frequently by the evangelist, meaning to take up and remove out of the way, and so destroy... Jesus bears the consequence of human sin in order that its guilt may be removed." Sir Edward Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, p. 176. *αἵματι* with *ἀναπαύει* means "to remove the guilt and punishment of sin by expiation, or to cause that sin be neither imputed nor punished."

to hold a subjective imputation, without admitting a corresponding objective imputation."<sup>1</sup> The language does not allow that He was only innocent and meek as a lamb, nor was He only a teacher, or just One who gave inward moral deliverance. Jesus bore all the sins that men ever committed; He took them on Himself all His earthly life, and was punished with death - all this to free His people from the penalty of their sin. This Lamb was without inherent sin, but never without the sin of others. "If Christ bore sin, His people do not need to bear it . . . Since God has appointed this way of deliverance, there is no other way."<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton also indicates that Jesus was our conscious Sin-bearer when He received baptism,<sup>3</sup> as He bore the sickness of His people, changed the "primeval curse of labour" into a blessing, withstood Satan's temptations, and the taunts of His family, and so was able to effect His miraculous cures. As Sin-bearer He was to destroy sin, the cause; therefore He could remove the effect by the healing word.<sup>4</sup>

The sufferings of Jesus Christ were the result of His conscious sin-bearing. As He came close to His death, He spoke with greater feeling and solemnity so that His disciples became afraid. Three of His most poignant sayings are clearly due to the mental agony He suffered, as a result of God afflicting His soul. (1) John, 12:27: "Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" is a cry of human anguish in the face of divine wrath, and reveals both Jesus' sin-bearing and sinless obedience. He could not have said these

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<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce, The Humiliation of Christ, pp. 318-9, 322.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 3:15, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 8:16-17, "When even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases."



things if He died only as a martyr. Smeaton points out that other martyrs have borne up better.<sup>1</sup> (2) The great anguish of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane<sup>2</sup> has been attributed by some to the temptation of Satan, but there is no evidence for this at all. Others have said that it was caused by a vivid view of the coming crucifixion but the intensity of the suffering rules out this subjective position. The only "tenable" and "plausible" view<sup>3</sup> is that Christ as a human being lost the presence of God in the garden because the Son was the official Sin-bearer, and God's wrath against sin was thus manifest. (3) The cry of desertion on the Cross<sup>4</sup> is explained only by the fact that God forsook Jesus, and for that period Jesus suffered the horrors of the second death.<sup>5</sup> Whale expresses the problem of this mysterious scene which defies a wholly satisfactory explanation:

"The history of doctrine is full of attempted explanations of that terrible cry. None is successful .... Only he could realise to the full the desolation which enmity against God always means... God was in Christ doing whatever was done here. Yet .... his (Christ's) sense of perdition was real and terrible."<sup>6</sup>

Even though Smeaton is not given to using the Old Testament sources for his proofs, he shows the Old Testament background for the substitutionary doctrine, especially as manifest in the apostles' teaching. The apostles put a vast emphasis on the Old Testament Sacrifices and temple

1 Dr. R. W. Dale has a good discussion along this same line and comes to the same conclusion as Dr. Smeaton. The Atonement, pp. 54-63.

2 Matthew 26:34-44.

3 Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 120 and footnote.

4 Matthew, 27:46. Walker says significantly of this explanation: "What other interpretation is possible?" (W. L. Walker, The Spirit and the Incarnation, 3rd edition, p. 135).

5 Hugh Martin in his book on the Atonement says, "His (Christ's) consciousness is a sin-bearer's consciousness during all the days of His flesh--as Dr. George Smeaton, than whom no greater authority on this theme exists, has done admirable service by so copiously and variously demonstrating." Martin, The Atonement, p. 200.

6 J. S. Whale, Christian Doctrine, pp. 87-88. Of course Smeaton seemed to forget that God was in Christ; along with others of his time emphasizing tri-theism rather than trinity.



services as typical<sup>1</sup> and symbolical of the atonement. The Mosaic law unites into a system ideas of divine holiness, the evil of sin, and the necessity of expiation, all symbolically taught by the sacrifices. All bloody sacrifices were atoning. Expressed in Smeaton's words, "the sacrifices were meant to exhibit the indispensable necessity of an atonement by vicarious expiation."<sup>2</sup> The sin-offering, designed to remove external, ceremonial, not moral, trespass, was established to develop among the children of Israel the idea of sin. The substitutionary character of the sin-offering is revealed in the ritual. The sinner brought a perfect, clean, live animal to the tabernacle. This, said Smeaton, signified the sinless holiness of Jesus (I Peter 1:19, Hebrews 9:14). The sinner laid his hand on the victim's head, transferring his sin to the substitute (Romans 8:3, 2 Cor. 5:21), and the animal was killed by the worshipper as the penal "wages of sin." Only then did the priest's ritual commence. He received the blood as his own and sprinkled it, thus covering and expiating the sin, making an objective atonement and propitiating divine wrath.<sup>3</sup> The sacrifice was then burned with fire producing a sweet-smelling savour, the blood-sprinkling referring to substitutionary suffering, the fire denoting the Holy Spirit, and the savour illustrating the vicarious fulfilling of the law.<sup>4</sup> When Christ came, the burdensome ceremonial law was superseded, and all the types merged into the sublime sacrifice of Christ in His atoning death.

J. J. Van Oosterzee, a Dutch theologian of Smeaton's time, says concerning this interpretation of the sacrifices: "As a sacrifice, Christ takes away sins .... the taking away is a consequence of taking them upon himself in the sense of making expiation for them, as the sacrificial victim symbolically did for the sins of the offerer .... he thus ascribes to the sacrifice of the Lord a so-called retroactive effect. Such an operation of this sacrifice were absolutely inconceivable if anything less than an objective expiation had here taken place." And again: "I John 2:2, In the death of the Lord he sees .... the means absolutely necessary for the expiation of the sins of the world. Not merely purification from the dominion of sin, but also from its

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton distinguishes between type and symbol; typical theology emphasizing Old Testament prefigurings of New Testament facts; and symbolical theology seeking out the spiritual ideas underlying the sacrifices. Vol. II, Op. Cit., pp. 26-27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 4:25-35.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton claims this as his own explanation, with Patristic sanction, but it is hard to justify. Hebrews 13:11 and Ephesians 5:2 are used as substantiation. Oehler's suggestion that the fire denotes God's holiness (Smeaton, p. 16) is more feasible, and the sweet savour represents the sacrifice much more than the active obedience.

guilt and curse, he brings into immediate connection with Christ's blood (I John 1:7), and comprehends in the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins the main import of the Gospel message."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Alfred Cave in his fine book, The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice, teaches:<sup>2</sup> "It has been maintained that this act of the ritual signified at every time and in every place a transference of sinfulness. This ... view is un-scriptural and contradictory ..... So, too, Kurtz is no nearer the mark when he maintains the imposition of hands to symbolize the transference of punishment due to the offerer's sins .... The imposition of the hand symbolized .... a dedication of the victim to the double purpose of atonement and sacrifice. Erroneous views upon this point are the infallible consequences of erroneous view upon Mosaic symbolism generally." V. Taylor substantially agrees: "The idea that the sacrifice is a substitutionary rite is largely due to a misunderstanding of the act of the worshipper in laying his hands on the head of the victim. This ritual act does not signify the transference of guilt, for the offering is still regarded as holy; it is the worshipper's acknowledgement that the offering is his own, and that he identifies himself with it."<sup>3</sup>

Many have agreed with Smeaton in his position, but there is a wide divergence in opinion, and the Scripture does not settle the argument either way; it seems to be a matter of conjecture, thus eliminating it as a solid evidence for substitution. However, along with other scripture symbolism, this view is acceptable to many today.

<sup>1</sup> J. J. Van Oosterzee, The Theology of the New Testament, pp. 356, 393-4.

<sup>2</sup> p. 129-30.

<sup>3</sup> V. Taylor, Jesus and His Sacrifice, p. 50. Also see G. B. Stevens, The Christian Doctrine of Salvation, pp. 11-13.

In reference to the epistle to the Hebrews, Smeaton points out that it presents a comprehensive comparison of Christ with the Jewish High Priest. "From explicit language contained in this epistle, we are warranted to conclude that the Lord Jesus was a high priest on earth; that He offered the sacrifice on earth; and that the exercise of His priestly functions in heaven is not to win redemption, but only to apply it."<sup>1</sup>

In Hebrews 2:17, "He is said to be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make atonement<sup>2</sup> for the sins of the people." The Jewish high priest only partly prefigured Jesus because: (1) He had to offer for his own sins; (2) he repeated the sacrifice yearly; (3) Jewish sacrifices were only for living men and therefore temporary; (4) and were merely for ceremonial sins, therefore simply external. Jesus was sinless, offered His sacrifice once-for-all, for all sin, previous, present and future, and completely purged sin from the conscience. Three words used from the Mosaic worship are keys to the priestly work of Christ: (a) "purify or purge" referring to the bearing of the defilement by Jesus (objective) and the resultant purging of the conscience (subjective). Jesus was both priest and victim.<sup>3</sup> (b) "Sanctify" which is the setting apart of a redeemed and dedicated people to be a holy priesthood. (c) "To make perfect," a very distinctive word of this epistle indicating the work of the atonement on and in the believer, for it put us in perfect fellowship with God, and perfects our conscience toward God so that we can serve Him acceptably here.

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Vol. II, Op. cit., pp. 336-7.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Vol. II, Op. cit., p. 337. *ἱλάσκειν* ~~ἱλασκειν~~ *καὶ ὁλοκαυτῶν* Expiation and propitiation are suggested also, but not reconciliation (A.V.) as the meaning of this word.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce, Op. cit., p. 307. "While as a priest He is our representative, as a sacrifice, He is our substitute."

Smeaton, disagreeing with the contention, made to eliminate substitution, that Christ's high-priesthood took place at and after the ascension, emphasizes that He was High Priest before Calvary, during His entire humiliation. As Priest He offered Himself on earth, entering into the holiest by His own blood once, this latter word showing the historical nature of the event in time. The shedding of blood refers specifically to His death on the Cross which took place well before the actual ascension. Also in opposition to Socinians and Romanists, the repeated stressing of "one offering" and "one sacrifice" in verses 12 and 14 of chapter 10, along with the "once-for-all" that appears frequently in the epistle seems to justify the teaching that the atonement of Jesus was on earth, of permanent validity, not needing repetition, and completely efficacious.<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton, following Anselm closely, taught very earnestly the necessity of the atonement to avert punishment. "God would not subject His Son to such agonies if sin could have been remitted without satisfaction."<sup>2</sup> The atonement was not only to confirm Christ's teachings and impress the human mind with God's love, but even as the Jews so clearly recognized, the only way of access to a Holy God, the only way of pardon for sin, the only way to avert punishment, was by atonement, and that such as only the Son of God Himself could make.

The subjective necessity of the atonement is embedded deeply in the conscience of man. "As God's representative within, it is taken for granted that conscience will acquit only when God acquits, and possess peace only when God has spoken peace through the finished redemption."<sup>3</sup> Conscience knows

<sup>1</sup> Van Oosterzee, Op.cit., pp. 359-60, disagrees with Smeaton, saying Jesus' High-Priesthood is in heaven. As one who champions substitution this is significant.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Op.cit., Vol I, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Op.cit., p. 50.

that sin demands punishment, for the sense of guilt is increased by growing holiness if there is no satisfaction for sin. Only an infinite atonement will truly heal the conscience. Hugh Martin in his book written at about the same time as those of Smeaton writes: "When I am aroused in conscience to seek remission of sin, what is there in my conscience that must be met and removed? ..... two things; - a fear that wrath is coming, and a feeling that it ought to come ..... a pardon without propitiation ..... does not deal with man's conscience or moral nature at all."<sup>1</sup>

Continuing along the line of Anselm, Smeaton says the objective necessity of the atonement is founded on the divine rights of God and man's creaturehood. Justice is essential. God was despoiled of His honour by sin, so sin must be punished and demands satisfaction. The atonement restores God's rights and makes salvation possible; it takes up man's obligations at the point where man failed.<sup>2</sup> Smeaton answers three main objections to this doctrine: (1) "God is a Father, not a judge, and He only corrects as a Father." But Smeaton says no, we are all by nature the children of wrath, (Ephesians 2:3) and only become God's children when we receive the atonement.<sup>3</sup> (2) "Punishment is only the natural consequence of sin." This principle nullifies forgiveness, does away with retribution, and ignores the justice and moral government of God. (3) "God cannot be wronged or injured as He is above what men do". But Smeaton replies that God is personal and has a relationship with each individual. He must punish sin to be true to Himself, for He loves righteousness and hates sin, and is just. Denney adds a

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<sup>1</sup> The Atonement, pp. 180, 182.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent substantiation of Anselm and Smeaton, see Brunner: The Mediator, pp. 444-445

<sup>3</sup> John 1:12.



different note going far beyond Smeaton's understanding here: "We may say reverently that this was the only way in which God could forgive. He cannot deny Himself, means at the same time He cannot deny His grace to the sinful, and He cannot deny the moral order in which alone He can live in fellowship with men; and we see the inviolableness of both asserted in the death of Jesus. Nothing else in the world demonstrates how real is God's love to the sinful, and how real the sin of the world is to God. And the love which comes to us through such an expression, bearing sin in all its reality, yet loving us through and beyond it, is the only love which at once forgives and regenerates the soul."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton says again that if God works apart from justice, then all human relationships and ideals of justice are worse than useless. Dr. Dale's book, The Atonement, adds a very cogent argument marshalling the sermons of Peter in Acts to show that Peter's entire appeal in these messages was not on the basis of God's love, but on the fair basis of deserved punishment for a great sin.<sup>2</sup> So said Grotius: God could have dispensed with any satisfaction had He so pleased, could have left sin unpunished, and only punished it as an example to deter others from future sin. But Smeaton considers this a shallow view of sin, pointing out that in I Thessalonians 1:10 the wrath of God is the cause of punishment, the result of a holy God's hatred of moral evil. (Actually this verse deals entirely with the eschatological "wrath to come"). "Wrath is an essential mood of the divine mind in respect to sin."<sup>3</sup> Christ bore God's wrath as an essential part of His atonement, and thus the Christian never experiences this wrath.<sup>4</sup>

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1 J. Lenney, The Death of Christ, p. 297.

2. R. W. Dale, The Atonement, pp. 99-119. This great sin was the crucifixion of Christ.

3 Smeaton, Op. Cit., Vol II, p. 312.

4 Romans 5:9, 9:22. Hebrews 3:11, Revelation 2:15. The eschatological understanding of the "wrath of God" which would have proved a much milder explanation of many of these texts, is a development of the twentieth century. It is hard to see why it was neglected for so many years, for it forms such a large part of the prophets message. See J. S. Steward, Man in Christ, p. 218.



Smeaton reveres Anselm and his teaching to the extent that he says Anselm gave to the world the "true theory of the atonement .... in its fundamental principles or ..... systematic form ..... He stands between two epochs, inheriting the one, moulding the other."<sup>1</sup> Yet Smeaton feels the need to criticize his view of punishment: "Anselm drew a far too wide distinction between punishment and satisfaction, as if they had nothing in common, and stood in no relation to each other. This may be called an undetected self-contradiction or inconsistency in Anselm's reasoning; for when he says that every sin must be followed either by punishment or satisfaction, it follows that, if there be no relation between the two, the satisfaction would be no compensation or substitute for punishment."<sup>2</sup> Hughes brings out this "inconsistency" in Anselm's reasoning, and claims that the change by the post-Reformation divines to punishment and satisfaction went far toward annulling Anselm's whole argument.<sup>3</sup>

The great inadequacy in Smeaton's theology here is that he did not seem to realize that in Christ "Punisher and Punished are one."<sup>4</sup> As a result, his doctrine of penal atonement is unnecessarily harsh, and the tremendous love and compassion of God the Father (sensed in Denney) have been almost obscured by God's judgement and wrath. This was not as true to Smeaton as to many of his contemporaries, nor is it true as he

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1 Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 510. Denney also has this to say about Anselm: "It is Anselm's profound grasp of this truth (even in forgiving sin God cannot ignore it) which, in spite of all its inadequacy in form and of all the criticism to which its inadequacy has exposed it, makes the Cur Deus Homo the truest and greatest book on the atonement that has ever been written." Denney, Op. cit., p. 295.

2 Smeaton, Anselm and His Theory of the Atonement - British and Foreign Evangelical Review, October, 1859, Vol. VIII, p. 953.

3 T. H. Hughes, The Atonement, p. 31.

4 Leonard Hodgson, The Doctrine of the Atonement, p. 142.

develops the doctrine, yet the objectivity of approach, practically eliminating subjective revelation and retrospection, has caused this impression to be made.

J. McLeod Campbell represents some of the theologians of his day when he says: "I object ... to the conception that these sufferings were penal."<sup>1</sup> Then and now many object to the idea, and desire to "get rid of it" as being "immoral" and "unchristian." Farrar said: "The bare substitution of one person to be punished in the place of another ... is an ignorant, barbarous, and pagan form of the doctrine against which Scripture protests."<sup>2</sup> Rashdall, who violently opposed the substitutionary doctrine, wrote: "And it is clearly St. Paul's conception that Christ has paid that penalty in order that man may not have to pay it. It is impossible to get rid of this idea of substitution, or vicarious punishment, from any faithful representation of St. Paul's doctrine ..... There are, indeed, only a few passages which necessarily suggest the idea of substituted punishment or substituted sacrifice. But there they are, and St. Paul's argument is unintelligible without them."<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hywel Hughes in his book, The Atonement,<sup>4</sup> gives his opinion of the penal theory: "The whole idea of the transference of guilt and punishment is sub-Christian." And again, "The first and basic weakness is in its idea of God," and yet later on he says: "God was somehow involved or implicated in human sin and its consequences, that a certain sense of this was in His moral consciousness, and that His effort as atonement was an attempt to

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1 J. McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement, p. 290. The writer of this thesis admires and sympathizes with Campbell's noble Christian spirit, obvious in his writing; he is seeking to find a way to be true to scripture and avoid the harshness of the orthodox theologians. Orr's appraisal of Campbell is most helpful. James Orr, Christian View of God and the World, pp. 358-366.

2 F. W. Farrar in The Atonement, A Clerical Symposium, p. 82.

3 Rashdall, Op. Cit., p. 92, 94.

4 pp. 29, 68, 318.

rectify a situation in which He felt Himself implicated, and so find solace for His moral sense." What kind of an idea of God is that? Rashdall's opinion again: "The undeniable reality of vicarious suffering .... which so easily degenerates into the superstition of vicarious expiation, and even the more immoral notion of vicarious punishment."<sup>1</sup> G. B. Stevens considers even the self-identification of God in this as ridiculous, spending most of his book refuting and ridiculing the penal satisfaction principle: "A self-punishment of God. This is the reductio ad absurdum of penal satisfactionism."<sup>2</sup> It is unwarranted language to call this theory primitive, immoral, unchristian, etc., in an attempt to beat down the opposition with words. Both sides set up straw men and knock them down. Smeaton teaches the penal theory as part of Scripture, amply attested in all of the Bible. It is a harsh theory only when God the Father's presence is forgotten in the atonement, but it must be admitted that this omission was rather consistent in the writing and teaching of Smeaton and his colleagues, so that aversion to the tri-theistic form they gave to it was somewhat justified.

Three outstanding modern theologians have signified a trend toward the recognition of this principle's genuine place in true atonement teaching. Vincent Taylor, though denying substitutionary atonement, admits: "We cannot tell, of course, if St. Paul would have described these sufferings as penal, since he does not employ the term; but we are entitled to say that the kind of suffering implied when he speaks of Christ being 'made sin on our behalf' and having become 'a curse for us,' while not punishment, is penal suffering in the sense defined above .....

Christ came under the curse of sin and shared

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<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> G. B. Stevens, The Christian Doctrine of Salvation, p. 448.

its penalty. There is no question of the transference of punishment from their shoulders to His own, still less any thought of a measured equivalent of suffering: what is meant is that in the work of redemption Christ submitted to the judgement of God upon sin."<sup>1</sup> A.M. Hunter in his book, Interpreting Paul's Gospel, explains 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13: "The cross is an act of God's doing in which the Sinless one, for the sake of sinners, somehow experienced the horror of the divine reaction against sin that for us there might be condemnation no more ..... Christ on His Cross so identified Himself with the doom impending on sinners that, through His act, the curse passes away, and we go free ..... Christ, by God's appointing, dies the sinner's death and so removes sin ..... Christ bore our sins. We are not fond nowadays of calling Christ's suffering 'penal' or of styling Him our 'substitute'; but can we avoid using some such words as these to express Paul's view of the atonement?"<sup>2</sup> Dr. Emil Brunner asserts strongly: "To the modern mind the idea that God can be angry is as intolerable as the idea that He exercises punishment and judgement ..... modern man ..... is so accustomed to think that God's function is to stand surety for human purposes. It is the genuinely theocentric Idea of God that men find intolerable ..... Because the thought of the Holiness of God, and the gravity of the idea of law, is no longer understood, man ..... makes ..... a God who is of the kind he likes. Punishment is regarded as a relic of the primitive instinct of revenge. So long as we continue to reject the scriptural ideas of Divine Holiness, of divine wrath, and of divine righteousness in punishment, the process of decay within the Christian church will continue."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> V. Taylor, The Atonement in New Testament Teaching, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> p. 30-31, 91-2.

<sup>3</sup> E. Brunner, The Mediator, P. 468. All of pp. 455-468 are very pertinent.

Concerning the substitutionary doctrine as a whole, Smeaton's position, though uncompromising, was not as rigid as that of such men as William Shedd, Charles Hodge, James Buchanan, Daniel Dewar, R. S. Candlish, Cunningham and Philippi in Germany. On the other hand there were far less rigid than Smeaton, such as Van Oosterzee, Dale, A. Cave, A. H. Strong, Rainy and A. A. Hodge who could write: "Notwithstanding that the guilt of all our sins is thus charged to Christ, and expiated in Him, all their blame, shame, pollution, and power, as inherent personal habits or principles, remain all the while inalienably ours ..... personal moral qualities and ... pollution .... cannot be transferred by imputation."<sup>1</sup> Campbell, Bushnell, Farrar and followers like Stevens and Clarke wrote powerful arguments against the substitutionary view and in favor of the moral influence theory which Smeaton could not tolerate as a all-inclusive theory.

The case for substitution has been well put by four scholars ranging throughout the last hundred years. Dorner in his Christology says: "Every interpretation of these passages is forced, which does not find in them the idea of substitution; and this not only subjectively, the vicarious satisfaction of Christ, but also objectively, that His substituted experience and acts also had their corresponding objective consequences."<sup>2</sup> Robert Rainy in his book on Christian doctrine observes: "A fair account of the mind of the Church on this matter, as revealed along the whole course of early literature, would show that the idea which constantly reappears, amid all variations and fluctuations, is the idea of substitution ..... It is ..... a serious defect on Ritschl's part that ..... he dismisses

<sup>1</sup> A. A. Hodge, *The Atonement*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Dorner, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Christologie*, Vol. I, p. 182.

so unceremoniously the earlier indications of the Church's Faith concerning the Lord's death."<sup>1</sup> James Orr wisely indicates that: "The cogency of much of the criticism passed on the doctrine of vicarious atonement rests on individualistic presuppositions ..... The use of such theories as Bushnell's is to remind us that the world is full of substitutionary forces; that they are involved in the very nature and ministries of love .... Altruism has substitution in its heart."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Brunner says: "The idea of substitution gathers up all these elements into one. If the Cross really means the dealing of God with humanity, then we cannot interpret it in any other way than in the sense of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement."<sup>3</sup>

Today many earnest scholars are returning to acceptance of substitution as basic in the Christian faith. Professor Manson writes: "Both .... traditions and ..... their expositors are agreed ... in the objective significance of the broken bread. This stands for the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of Man ..... not only offered to God on behalf of men, but - in accordance with the true meaning of sacrifice now at last perceived - offered in their stead."<sup>4</sup> Hodgson states: "Christ suffered in our stead and ..... on our behalf."<sup>5</sup> Professor Snaith affirms: "One fact stands out stark and plain. That death on the Cross was a substitution. He was hanging on that Cross, and by rights that is where we ought to be .... God is there dealing with the results of sin."<sup>6</sup> Karl Barth adds: "The picture before us is that of an inconceivable exchange, of a Katallage, that is, a substitution. Man's reconciliation with God takes place through God's putting Himself in

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1 Rainy, Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine, p. 306.

2 James Orr, Progress of Dogma, pp. 340-342.

3 E. Brunner, Op. cit., p. 503.

4 William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 146.

5 Hodgson, Op. cit., p. 142.

6 Norman Snaith, I Believe In ...., p. 75.



man's place and man's being put in God's place, as a sheer act of grace. It is this inconceivable miracle which is our reconciliation."<sup>1</sup> Even Vincent Taylor admits that substitution is a strong "doctrinal fortress" which is hard to "outflank, capture, and dismantle."<sup>2</sup>

Much time and space has been taken on the substitutionary emphasis of Smeaton because it is the core of his teaching and colors all the rest of his ideas. Smeaton's conviction was that the whole Christian faith is unintelligible without this principle. It has been believed and taught by scholars down through the ages, and is still believed and taught by scholars because Scripture is so full of it, and human experience verifies and understands when someone says, "Christ died in my place."

Smeaton, however, was guilty of serious weaknesses in building his case. (1) He seriously "stretched" the Scripture to justify previously held convictions. Substitution is "found" in many places where it was not originally incorporated. This is best exemplified in his insistence that all Son-of-Man passages are substitutionary. This tends to weaken the true force of his cumulative evidence. (2) Smeaton is too rigid in his judicial balancing. This enters into his theorizing as to the interrelationships of the Godhead, and is obvious in his entire structure of the doctrine. He tends to make the figure of Jesus almost impersonal. He follows Anselm in this, and is a product of Scottish 19th century scholasticism, but it is especially undesirable in his insistence on equivalence of guilt and satisfaction: "And we consider it in a biblical way only when we study it with a full recognition of the fact that infinite guilt

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1 Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, p. 115.

2 V. Taylor, The Atonement in New Testament Teaching, p. 197.

renders an infinite satisfaction necessary, nay, absolutely indispensable."<sup>1</sup> (3) Smeaton completely ignores the presence of God the Father in the suffering and death of Christ. This is one of his greatest faults. He describes lucidly the unity of Christ's two natures as God-Man,<sup>2</sup> but fails completely to follow this principle through to its logical consequences, Christ seeming to be only representative humanity in His atoning work. It isn't because no one of Smeaton's time emphasized God's sharing in the atonement, for they did. A great preacher of the time, Joseph Parker, said, "God so loved the world that He gave Himself, embodied in the form of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Professor Chapman, also of this period, states, "that God Himself, of His own unsolicited love and mercy, should Himself, hypostatically in Christ, endure ... the death of the Cross ..... is most consonant with our best conceptions of generous self-sacrifice."<sup>4</sup> And it was A. A. Hodge who penned: "The amazing love of God to his own people, determining him .... to assume Himself, in the person of his Son, the responsibility of bearing the penalty and satisfying justice." In another place, "Christ is the one satisfied as well as the one satisfying, the one punishing as well as the one punished; but he loves us enough to punish himself in our place. This is the wonder of eternity!"<sup>5</sup> The problem is extremely difficult, but Smeaton apparently never faced it. In explaining 2 Corinthians, 5:18-19, Smeaton allows the possibility that "God was in Christ" refers to Christ's divine nature, but finally settles on the correct translation, "God was reconciling the world unto Himself in Christ," never apparently conscious of the pregnant possibilities of this passage, or perhaps unwilling to

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1 Smeaton, Vol. II, Op. cit., p. 324. Stevens roundly criticizes Smeaton for this Op. cit., pp. 107-8. Also Rashdall consigns Smeaton to oblivion on this basis. Op. cit., p. 46.

2 Dr. A. J. Tait in Atonement in History and in Life, p. 124, "No conception of the Atonement has any foundation apart from the belief that the Lord Jesus is God-Man."

3 Joseph Parker, The Paraclete, pp. 206-7.

4 The Atonement, A Clerical Symposium, p. 163.

5 A. A. Hodge, Op. cit., pp. 29, 308.

entertain its scheme-shattering conclusions.<sup>1</sup> (4) There is no attempt to deal with any critical problems due to the fact that the Scripture in toto was accepted as infallibly inspired.

But Smeaton has much to commend in his presentation. (1) His philology is good, and his exegesis as a rule is scholarly - although not as objective as he would intimate. (2) The accumulation of scripture evidence on the substitutionary doctrine is so overwhelming, that even taking away all doubtful passages leaves a substantial nucleus of powerful substantiation. (3) His attitude toward those with whom he disagrees is always most gracious, and some of his insights as to their weaknesses were most accurate. J. McLeod Campbell believed that Christ's death was a perfect confession of humanity's sin, and this true repentance and confession of sin fully expiated human guilt and satisfied divine justice. Smeaton declares the repair of evil is necessary, and he is surely right.<sup>2</sup> He says: "Of course these notions sweep away the judicial and forensic side of theology; and the whole question of the sinner's objective relation toward God, disordered by nature, and calling for reparation, is a total blank in this theology."<sup>3</sup> A solid insight, true today!

#### Active and Passive Obedience

Smeaton made a strong case for the equal importance of the active and passive obedience of Christ in the atonement. Melancthon and Calvin were among those who set forth that the "active and passive obedience of Christ

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Vol. II, Op. cit., pp. 214-220.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hughes says in regard to this same theory of Campbell's that it fails to recognise or deal with the guilt of sin and its power in the soul. Op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol I, p. 435. See also Crawford: Atonement, pp. 316-334, for a strong criticism of Campbell.

were equally vicarious and equally essential.<sup>1</sup> Smeaton says that God gave laws which were broken and the divine law must be fulfilled. Christ did this by His active obedience, keeping the law, (preceptive rectitude), and His passive obedience (judicial rectitude) at the Cross. The active obedience, of course, was the result of His sinlessness. His obedience validates His teaching. His sinlessness made His sin-bearing possible. Complete voluntary obedience to the will of God was the supreme single principle of His life, even as a child.<sup>2</sup> His perfect humility found expression in constant renunciation of His own honour in deference to His Father's.<sup>3</sup> All of His actions pleased God.<sup>4</sup> His perfect life is vicarious; He lived the way we are supposed to live. The culmination of His obedience, says Smeaton, was His abstinence from the tree of life. This is where Adam failed. Jesus gave His life and shed His blood as an act of perfect self-denial.

The coming of the Son of God to fulfil the law, according to Smeaton, was the centre of world history. The first great fact in human history was sin; the second was the fulfilment of the law by Christ as a corrective and counterpart of the catastrophe due to Adam's disobedience. Jesus overthrew only the traditions of the elders, not the law of God. In fulfilling the law toward God and man, at every step, Christ was our substitute, and therefore His people are regarded as if they had always fulfilled the divine law, and are thus made righteous in their representative, the second Adam. "The righteousness<sup>5</sup> of Christians is the Son of God dying on the Cross and going

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1 Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 528.

2 John, 5:30, Luke 2:49.

3 John, 8:50.

4 John, 8:29.

5 Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 203.

to the Father. Christ Himself is our righteousness." Smeaton says the fulfilling of the law is as important in the atonement as His endurance of the curse.<sup>1</sup> This is the essence of Christ's active obedience. In actively obeying the law in our stead, Christ "fulfilled the law of righteousness" and atoned for our sins every moment of His life on earth as well as in His death on the cross. He lived as we were to have lived and died as we deserved to die. It is "all of one piece." A. B. Bruce in his well-known book, The Training of the Twelve, agrees: "a life... which was, in fact, one grand indignity from beginning to end."<sup>2</sup> Following this thought through, Bruce says in another of his works: "Christ was under the anger of God ... not only during His last sufferings, but during the whole time of His humiliation."<sup>3</sup> This is the negative side, but Smeaton affirms: "The law must be kept, and sin must be punished; and divine wisdom and grace provided a man, that is, a God-man, who was in a position to accomplish both, and did so."<sup>4</sup> James Buchanan puts it thus: "The mediatorial work of Christ on earth properly consisted in His humiliation, sufferings, and obedience."<sup>5</sup> Buchanan uses Philippians 2:8 as his Scripture basis and so does Van Oosterzee: "The later theological distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ is least of all to be justified by an appeal to our Apostle. The whole life of the Lord is for him one act of obedience which finds its point of culmination in the death on the Cross."<sup>6</sup> and again: "His life and especially His suffering unto death, is one long warfare against this enemy, out of

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1 Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 437. Anselm, of course, says that Christ owed active obedience to God, His death being the infinite "extra."

2 p. 218.

3 A. B. Bruce, The Humiliation of Christ, p. 335.

4 Smeaton, Ibid., p. 197.

5 James Buchanan, The Atonement, p. 301.

6 Van Oosterzee, Op. cit., p. 307.

which He comes forth triumphant."<sup>1</sup> Even Rashdall states: "Even when St. Paul seems to dwell exclusively upon 'the death of the cross,' the thought of the voluntary descent from heaven and the whole life of obedience and humiliation is always there in the background."<sup>2</sup> Grensted asserts: "It is by the whole incarnate life of Christ that we are saved, the death being but its climax," but later follows: "And with the coming of a more human theology, the strict doctrine of obedientia activa, as a separate part of the scheme, became unnecessary, and has gradually fallen out of sight. In later Calvinism little is heard of it."<sup>3</sup> Why? H. Maldwyn Hughes tells us: "Some of the Reformers distinguished between the Active and Passive Obedience of Christ ..... The distinction is artificial, and the deductions drawn from it cannot be sustained, but it is a point of prime importance that Christ's life of active obedience to righteousness was an essential element in His reconciling work."<sup>4</sup> Actually this is exactly what Smeaton is maintaining. Smeaton felt that Anselm was weak in neglecting active obedience, but Brunner says: "Even the most abstract form of the doctrine of the Atonement never isolated the death of Christ in the way that modern critics claim it did. For it was always plain that the presupposition for the effectiveness of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ was its moral testing in His life. The so-called 'active obedience' was always regarded - even by Anselm - as the indispensable condition for the significance of the so-called 'passive obedience.' This is an approach to the right doctrine ..... the whole life of Jesus ..... should be regarded from this double standpoint of suffering and action."<sup>5</sup> Smeaton's emphasis on the importance of both, it all being of

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<sup>1</sup> Van Oosterzee, Op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Rashdall, Op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> L. W. Grensted, A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement, pp. 57-251.

<sup>4</sup> H. Maldwyn Hughes, What Is the Atonement?, p. 126.

<sup>5</sup> Brunner, Mediator, pp. 509-10. Anselm did not neglect active obedience as Smeaton suggests, but emphasized it differently. See above.



one piece, seems to be well sustained even by some who criticize.

But Smeaton also claims that it was Christ's active obedience that glorified God<sup>1</sup>, for by His obedience He restored God's image (which is His glory) in man, and we manifest this and glorify God ourselves by purity and obedience. When Smeaton asserts that this active obedience restored the glory and majesty of which sin had robbed God ( language direct from Anselm), one may question if it were not rather that Christ manifests God's glory by giving of Himself on the Cross, gaining complete victory over the power of sin and death, and manifesting the redemptive power of God's love by reconciling rebellious man to God. God's glory is seen more in His will and power to save, than in an abstract holiness.

#### Love and Justice Equal

Yet the holiness of God revealed in His absolute justice in dealing with sin must necessarily be emphasized with great earnestness as equal with His love, and Smeaton does this from the beginning of his first volume at great length and recurrently thrusts it into his works. It is an important cause of controversy today, as it was then. Yes, God is angry at sin, but it was His love that provided the atonement. His honour had to be restored, but He was the Author of the restoration.

Smeaton's atonement discussion begins on the great theme of the Bible declared in John 3:16, that the source of the atonement is entirely in God Himself, and particularly emanates from His love. "These words of Christ plainly show that the biblical doctrine on this point is not duly exhibited, unless love receives a special prominence; and that it would be a misrepre-

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<sup>1</sup> John 17:4.

sentation against which the Biblical divine must protest, if, under the influence of any theory or dogmatic prejudice, love is not allowed to come to its rights. If even justice were made paramount, the balance of truth would be destroyed."<sup>1</sup> But love is God's communicative principle while His justice is the self-asserting activity of God whereby He maintains His rights and honour. Justice and love are perfectly balanced. The more inflexible the justice, the greater the love, and the infinite boundless love of God for the world is revealed in that He was not deterred by the magnitude of the cost, the sacrifice of His Son. "Thus the Cross displayed the love of God in providing the substitute, and was the highest manifestation of its reality and greatness."<sup>2</sup> Here is perfect harmony (not tension) between love and justice. The demand of justice is met by the provision of love. Martin adds a cogent word, "It was no proof to me of love on God's part that He should propose to pardon what Divine justice did not inflexibly demand should be punished ..... to punish where justice does not demand it savors of cruelty ..... I see a love so great that for the sake of those for whom remission is to be provided it spares not an object infinitely precious, infinitely lovely, love-worthy and beloved."<sup>3</sup> Orr gives this principle a slightly different turn: "Father and Lawgiver ... are in no way opposites. God can forgive sin but can never tamper with the condemning testimony of His law against it; cannot forgive it even, without seeing that, in the very act of forgiveness, the interests of holiness are conserved."<sup>4</sup> A.A. Hodge seems to go a little deeper in saying: "But the truth is that the love and tenderness of the Father is the cause, not the effect, of the sacrificial death of His Son .... Christ in His single Person unites the three parties of the offended

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol I p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Martin, Op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>4</sup> James Orr, Progress of Dogma, pp. 343-4.

God, the mediating priest and the substituted victim. It is not one divine Person offering satisfaction to another Divine Person. ....the divine nature in Christ .... is the very nature that both demands and furnishes the satisfaction... he made satisfaction for the sins of men to himself, by himself, by means of his own agonies .... But to us this is especially revealed in the divine-human Person of Christ ..... he is a man ..... but the man is God, and the blended righteousness and love which his death reveals are the righteousness and love of God."<sup>1</sup> And again: "It is all the greater love because the sacrifice was absolutely necessary to attain its object. It is all the sweeter and holier love, because, while making such entire sacrifice of self, it refuses all sacrifice of principle."<sup>2</sup> And once more: "The amazing love of God to his own people, determining him .... to assume himself, in the person of his Son, the responsibility of bearing the penalty and satisfying justice."<sup>3</sup>

Smeaton raises the question, "How can God both love and hate man?" He maintains that the Bible affirms both, clearly stating that God loves man as His creature or in union with Christ; but God hates man as a sinner, for sin necessarily provokes His anger and His punishment. When we realise that Christ resolved the paradox, bearing the full burden of God's hatred and punishment of sin, then we comprehend that reconciliation originates with God. Smeaton adds that it is necessary to understand "hate" in a relative sense, since it has been swallowed up in the love which provided the atonement. We do not like the word "hate" used from God to man, but Smeaton softens it in this way, another evidence of his modifying graciousness. Brunner says:

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1 A.A. Hodge, Popular Lectures on Theological Themes, pp. 252-3.

2 A.A. Hodge, The Atonement, p. 320.

3 Ibid, p.29.

"The Cross is the only possible way in which the absolute holiness and the absolute mercy of God are revealed together. God cannot make this process any cheaper."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton seems to gather together most of his scorn toward the tendency of his time to seek to portray a God who was love only. This movement was epitomized in the moral influence theory and the doctrine of absolute or free forgiveness was a natural rebellion against the Calvinist tendency to rejoice in the condemnation of sinners, and to insist that Christ died only for the elect few. Smeaton did not rejoice in condemnation, but his type of logic did accept only the elect few as objects of God's favor. Smeaton argues that "A God all mercy" is a God of indulgence and lacking in justice; a holy life has its basis in objective redemption from guilt by Christ's blood. We could not worship a God who was not just as well as loving, for the entire moral fabric of the universe would be undermined. The word "gave" in John 3:16 is not used in the sense of a simple act of generosity, but is the aorist, ἔδωκεν, [of the Greek word δίδωμι] meaning to give in the sense of sacrifice. It is the word used in Romans 8:32 and also by Christ in Matthew 20:28. Such an understanding of this word invalidates theories which will not allow an "immoral" act on the part of God. A modern commentary says that "the meaning is not merely that God 'sent' His Son (I John 4:9), but that He 'gave him up to death' (cf. Romans 8:32) with an obvious reference to Genesis 22:2. It is as a sin-offering that the Son of man is to be 'lifted up'."<sup>2</sup> Objectors say that "God is love", allowing no room for His wrath or the vicarious theory. This is not in accordance with reason or Scripture, contends Smeaton, for it denies all authority, law, justice; it throws man back on himself, and undermines the total concept of the right administration

<sup>1</sup> Brunner, Op. Cit., p. 472.

<sup>2</sup> G. H. C. Mac Gregor, The Gospel of John, 10th impression, p. 81.

of God.

The school beginning with Abelard, and so well advanced in favour by Schleiermacher, holds to this moral influence theory - "nothing is to be seen in the atonement but love." Smeaton summarily and somewhat unfairly dismisses Abelard as one whose ethical laxity was a complete antithesis of Anselm's holiness of life and soundness of doctrine, and considers him the precursor of modern rationalism. Abelard's views were, says Smeaton, "unsettling" and "shallow."<sup>1</sup> Luther completely repudiated absolute pardon, saying it makes the whole New Testament a farce, but Socinus took up the doctrine again. Many of Smeaton's day promoted this theory, notably Campbell, Bushnell, Theodore Parker etc. and it is held extensively today. J. McLeod Campbell earnestly writes: "The first demand which the gospel makes upon us in relation to the atonement is, that we believe that there is forgiveness with God. Forgiveness - that is, love to an enemy surviving his enmity, and which, notwithstanding his enmity, can act towards him for his good; this we must be able to believe to be in God toward us, in order that we may be able to believe in the atonement..... But if God provides the atonement, then forgiveness must precede atonement; and the atonement must be the form of the manifestation of the forgiving love of God, not its cause."<sup>2</sup> This is a strong argument; Smeaton never was able to meet its strong points adequately because of his rigidity, but his insistence on the impossibility of absolute forgiveness is still legitimate. Smeaton says that unconditional pardon is opposed to natural and revealed theology as well as moral government. His position was affirmed by others of his time. Frederic Godet remarks: "To pardon it (sin) unconditionally would be to yield it an enduring place in the life of humanity."<sup>3</sup> In the same book A. Cave states: "It has ... been

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 520-521.

<sup>2</sup> John McLeod Campbell, *The Nature of the Atonement*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought*, pp. 336, 241.

said, 'the doctrine of Scripture is that of free forgiveness.' If such be the case, a method of rule is supposed to answer in the universe which does not succeed in any home, or society, or nation." In his book, The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice, Cave adds: "Holy love knows nothing of unconditional forgiveness."<sup>1</sup>

Modern theologians of stature strengthen the position. .P.T. Forsyth of the early 1900's insists: "It is only as God's act, then, that Christ's death can regain or retain a central place in faith..... and farther, it is only as an act in which His holiness gives the law to His love, and judgement makes grace precious. Holiness must be the first charge on the Saviour. If we spoke less about God's love and more about His holiness, more about His judgement, we should say much more when we did speak of his love."<sup>2</sup> James Denney says: "God's mercy to the sinful comes through his judgement upon sin. The pardon which is preached in Jesus Christ has the awful virtue of God's condemnation in it as well as the tenderness of His love to the sinful."<sup>3</sup> Here is a partial answer to McLeod Campbell - "His love to the sinful." Dr. Brunner says: "The Atonement .... consists in the combination of inflexible righteousness with its penalties, and transcendent love .... this is the meaning of the Cross: the reality of wrath, which is yet in some way a subordinate reality, and the far more overwhelming reality of the love of God."<sup>4</sup> In another place, "Opposition to the use of 'forensic' terms ... is due to the fact that the idea of the Divine Holiness has been swallowed up in that of Divine Love; this means that the Biblical Idea of God, in which the decisive element is this two-fold nature of holiness and love, is being replaced by the modern, unilateral, monistic Idea of God."<sup>5</sup> In Smeaton's

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<sup>1</sup> p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> P.T. Forsyth, The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Denney, Studies in Theology, p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> Brunner, Mediator, p. 520.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 467.



writing, love is often only a "communicative principle," and theologians of his time and type too often seem bound by the cold impersonal logic of a system to which they have committed themselves. Yet the New Testament record and the realities of life verify Smeaton's emphasis here. It may have seemed too unbending, and it was, yet he had moved away from the harsh extremes of some of his theological companions toward a "tender" view more in keeping with his nature.

And it is true that the "moral influence" theory which Smeaton repudiates as an all-inclusive theology of the atonement has proven notably inadequate. Even in his day, Hodge says of Bushnell: "Bushnell ... concludes by acknowledging that the Moral Influence theory is unable of itself to produce a moral influence result, and hence the Church doctrine must in idea be substituted in its place. That is, he confesses that his doctrine ... is ... absolutely impotent, and must be practically supplanted by the other."<sup>1</sup> L. W. Grensted in criticising Smeaton writes: "Smeaton objects strongly to the growing tendency to emphasize the love of God, spiritual life, and moral redemption, as 'a new phenomenon in theology,' and defends the old forensic method of discussion. He has all Luther's literalism, with none of Luther's spiritual and ethical fire."<sup>2</sup> This is a reasonably accurate criticism, but fails to take into account Smeaton's plea for balance between God's love and justice with His love still primary. And Grensted himself says later concerning the "moral theory": "Their view of sin is inadequate, and ... their view of forgiveness assigns to God an act of mercy which is not really just."<sup>3</sup> And in another place Grensted voices an admission and a warning concerning the penal theory: "And if we find it hard to sympathize with its sternness

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1 A. A. Hodge, The Atonement, p. 321. Also see James Orr, The Christian View of God and the World, p. 352.

2 L. W. Grensted, Short History of Atonement, p. 309.

3 Ibid., p. 364.

and severity, and believe that we have won to a truer conception, of the justice of God, we should remember that it was against sin that it was stern, and against those that would make light of sin. Today we are building our theories anew. It will be ill building, if we so emphasize God's love that we leave sin out of account."<sup>1</sup> Smeaton occasionally admits moral influence as one of the salutary effects of the atonement. He says it makes men reverent before the justice of God, and declares that the apostles teach that all spiritual blessings are related to the atonement, and all duty is motivated by the atonement. Further meditation leads to grateful love and an increasingly holy life. These things are true.

#### Christ Our Reconciliation

Smeaton avers that as "the righteousness of God is the positive side of the Pauline doctrine of the atonement, reconciliation by the death of Christ is its negative side."<sup>2</sup> This is an odd statement, difficult to understand, unexplained by Smeaton, and doing scant justice to such a tremendous concept. Reconciliation, says Smeaton, simply means that two parties at odds are made friends, by removing the cause of estrangement. Reconciliation creates a new relation with God, bridging the gulf caused by the sin of man, and God's resultant wrath.<sup>3</sup> In Ephesians 2:13-16, Paul explains how the atonement reconciles the Jew and the Gentile by reconciling both to God. This, of course, was accomplished by the cross. The paradox is that though it was God's love that reconciled us, yet His anger is pacified through the atonement which He originated. However, although the atonement removed the barriers preventing a full exercise of grace, man must receive the atonement. Only

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<sup>1</sup> Grensted, Op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol II, p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:9-10.

then is reconciliation complete.

When Christ died on the Cross, He was a true Mediator in reconciling two who had been enemies. "There was mutual hostility, in the proper sense of the word, between God and man: we, on the one side, were alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works (Colossians 1:21); and God, on the other side, was provoked to anger, and under the necessity of visiting man as the object of His wrath (Romans 5:9)."<sup>1</sup> Christ's atonement removed the sin and pacified the holy anger of God. Christ's blood was shed as a new covenant or its fundamental condition, for the sole ground of the covenant, says Smeaton, is sacrifice, which erects a new relation between God and man by which He becomes our God and we become His people. This new union has its basis in pardon and personal forgiveness by God and involves two steps, the reconciliation, and the inward renovation of our nature by writing the law on the heart.<sup>2</sup> Expiation of sin is essential to the Fatherhood of God; He was not already reconciled when He gave His Son, for sin is not a disease but a crime.

The idea of a double reconciliation is quite offensive to many theologians then and now. Smeaton reviews some of these opinions. Taylor of Norwich claimed that Christ's perfect obedience won Him the power to forgive sins. But nowhere in Scripture, says Smeaton, is our reconciliation ascribed to Christ's virtue. Koopman said his death was an example of God's aversion to sin, and paved the way for a general proclamation of forgiveness. McLeod Campbell believed that Christ's death was a confession of humanity's sin and merely true repentance and a perfect confession of sin is required to expiate sin. Smeaton declared the repair of evil is necessary. Schleiermacher's view is

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, *Cp. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34.

that Christ redeems men by receiving them into the fellowship of His life.<sup>1</sup> The atoning element is the blessedness of the indwelling God in Him. Law and Stier maintained that the atonement is a manifestation of the holy love of God for the purpose of pacifying our fears. Hofman says that Christ terminated sin as a condition in God's relation to man by keeping his communion with God, even to the end, against all opposition of sin and Satan. These men all maintain that the atonement makes no change in God's relation, only in man's. Once again Smeaton reiterates that all the language of Scripture is against these theories. They tend to relegate Christ to the level of His apostles. They also ignore the threats connected with impenitence and unbelief.<sup>2</sup> Others of Smeaton's day also demurred. J. A. Haldane writes: "We are not for a moment to suppose that the atonement was necessary to change the feelings of the Father toward those in whose behalf it was offered. No!"<sup>3</sup> Van Oosterzee positively states, "For the enmity existed not on the part of God, but only on the part of men;"<sup>4</sup> and quotes Romans 5:10, and 8:7. But what about Romans 5:9 talking about God's wrath? Romans 3:25, "a propitiation in His blood," Smeaton says, refers to the pacification of the just anger of God against sin.<sup>5</sup> This fits Smeaton's theology exactly, and is consistent with his teaching, but less place is given to this great theme than is warranted probably because Smeaton missed the great possibilities of 2 Cor. 5:19.

Denney adds few words in his book on this subject that help Smeaton's viewpoint: "An earthly father's readiness to forgive ... is not the same as

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1 Schleiermacher's view is widely taught today, and is partially true as one side of the picture. The author believes this is very effective in practical preaching and results in changed lives. We receive Christ and His life in us changes us.

2 John 3:18, 36; Romans 2:3-9; I Cor. 6:9-10; Hebrews 10:29-31.

3 J. A. Haldane, Doctrine of the Atonement, p. 71

4 Van Oosterzee, Op. cit., p. 310.

5 Idagapier allows Smeaton's meaning, but commentators are not in agreement. D. E. Baillie suggests: "It is just possible ... that we should translate it simply as 'mercy-seat' or 'place of forgiveness.'" (God Was In Christ, p. 188) C. H. Dodd asserts: "The Biblical sense of the verb is 'to perform an act whereby guilt or defilement is removed.'" (Romans p. 54) Both Nygren and Barth support Baillie's suggestion. Sanday in I.C.C. Romans and J. S. Stewart support Dodd's contention.

his actual forgiveness. When he actually forgives, he not only loves his penitent child as he always loved him, but his attitude to him is changed ... The only natural way to express the difference is to say that now he is reconciled to the offender. No one thinks that this is inconsistent with his always having loved him and if we do not think so in the case of an earthly father, there is no reason why we should make difficulty about it in the case of the Heavenly Father."<sup>1</sup> This is a clear and simple resolution to the problem that may satisfy some who seek a solution. Also it takes two parties to a covenant, and the new covenant is in His blood shed for remission of sins. Brunner puts it well when he says: "God reconciles Himself in Christ to man."<sup>2</sup>

#### The Centrality of the Atonement

Sneaton unquestionably believed that the atonement is central to the entire Christian faith, and to any adequate understanding of the Bible. It is the central fact in the history of the world, and all the great issues of eternity find their focal point in the Cross. God's inbreak into time in the incarnation was for only one purpose, that of atonement. The only revealed purpose of the incarnation is the atonement. The acceptance of our persons by God, the remission of our sins, and all the objective and subjective blessings that result are rooted in the atonement. The atonement took the sting out of death and insured total redemption for all believers.

The Cross is central in the Church. The blood of atonement is the everlasting basis of the new covenant, and without the covenant there would be no church. When Christians receive the symbols of the Lord's supper, they partake of His death. The atonement is received by faith. "Faith is .....

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<sup>1</sup> Denney, The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, pp. 237-8. Also see James Denney, Commentary on II Corinthians, pp. 211-217, on God's need of reconciliation.

<sup>2</sup> Brunner, Op. cit., p. 519.

that mental act on which the whole application of redemption on man's side depends .... a Spirit-given trust on the divine mercy and on a personal Saviour as opposed to man's native self-reliance."<sup>1</sup>

As the central fact in the history of the world, the cross has a specific relation to the world in its entirety. Christ's death was the beginning of a new world theocracy,<sup>2</sup> replacing the temple government and worship of the Jews. So when Jesus spoke of the destruction of the temple<sup>3</sup> and its being raised again, He was signaling the end of one era and the beginning of another. The ~~stone~~ temple, as John mentions, was only a type of the temple of His body, a symbol of God dwelling in His people. The new temple is built on the atonement, and is the Church, God's new people, the body of Christ, in which God dwells.

The atonement extends to all times in history and to all nations of the world. The Old Testament saints were saved by the retrospective efficacy of the atonement, the most important evidence of this fact being the transfiguration and the conversation "concerning His exodus." Christ knew that when He was crucified He would draw all nations unto Himself (John 12:32). Christ is the official Saviour of mankind. The gospel invitation is to all nations, classes, tribes, ranks of men. But this is far from a universalist conception, for according to Smeaton, it is only the elect from all groups who hear and accept the invitation.

The atonement is the central article of Christianity. Jesus showed His apostles on the Emmaus road and in the upper room from the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets how He had to suffer these things;<sup>4</sup> so Christ is Himself the link between the Old Testament records and the epistles.

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Atonement, Vol I, pp. 341-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> John 2:19; Matt. 27:63; Mark 15:29.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 24:25-27, 44-46.



The record in the epistles is Christ's own teaching through the apostles, who expanded and freely applied it. The apostles "represent the historical appearance of the Son of God as conditioned solely by sin .... The incarnation and the Cross are thus viewed as inseparable,<sup>1</sup> but both as means to an end, viz. the vindication of divine justice, the expiation of sin, the meritorious obedience to be rendered to the law."<sup>2</sup> The Cross became the centre of apostolic testimony, and became their boast, the main topic of their preaching. The Cross is the gospel. The Cross is the enemy of legalism.

Smeaton believed this ardently, and his considerations of the universal centrality of the atonement are well buttressed by strong evidence especially from the gospels, yet his failure to acknowledge the place of the resurrection in the gospel preaching is apparent and distressing. The primary proclamation of the apostles was the resurrection. G. Campbell Morgan wrote: "The resurrection... was the first article in the creed they professed and proclaimed .... 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified' is not the whole burden of preaching, neither is it the final or central fact thereof ..... It was His resurrection from among the dead that demonstrated the infinite value of the mystery of His death."<sup>3</sup> Van Oosterzee baldly states that the resurrection is more important to Paul than the Cross.<sup>4</sup> Mozley asserts: "The Cross can be interpreted in the light of the resurrection alone."<sup>5</sup> Even in Smeaton's rare references to the resurrection, the Cross is still supreme. In a passage proclaiming that the atonement was the "death of death and the cause of life," Smeaton says that Christ's death "unstinged"<sup>6</sup> it for His people.

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1 "The Incarnation and the Cross form an indissoluble unity. The first is fulfilled in the second, just as the second begins in the first." Brunner, Op. cit., p. 492.

2 Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 11-12.

3 G. Campbell Morgan, The Crises of Christ, pp. 329-30.

4 Van Oosterzee, Op. cit., p. 312.

5 Mozley, Op. cit., p. 216. See also, Stevens, Theology of the New Testament, P. 404.

6 Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol I, p. 269.

Yet in the same way that Smeaton seemed to ignore the tremendous significance of the resurrection as it validated the atonement, so did many minimize the atonement in relation to the incarnation, and Smeaton's emphasis is a strong counter-balance to this. Cave says concerning McLeod Campbell's theory: "Its fundamental assumption that the crucifixion was comparatively unimportant when compared with the incarnation, has vitiated its entire conclusions."<sup>1</sup> This issue too is often discussed and written about to this day, and where Smeaton and Brunner agree in both saying that the incarnation and the Cross are inseparable is the best place to leave it.

### Jesus Christ Our Representative

Smeaton contributes much to the understanding of Jesus Christ as representative Head of His people. In fulfilling the law toward God and man, at every step, Christ was our substitute, and therefore His people are regarded as if they had always fulfilled the divine law, and are thus made righteous in their representative, the second Adam. God loves man in union with Christ, for Christ is our righteousness. (Jeremiah 23:6). Christ is the realised ideal of what man was made to be. The apostles emphasised the dignity of Christ's person, always ascribing to Him a divine nature and acknowledging Him to be the representative Head of all the redeemed. Smeaton refers to Jesus as the second Adam, resulting from His eternal pact with His Father. Christ represents the race; He and His people are one person.<sup>2</sup> As death came by one representative, Adam, life came by the second representative, Christ.<sup>3</sup> These are the central characters in the two great facts of history, the fall, and the redemption. Jesus was what Adam should have been, and did what Adam should have done. This picture is clearly drawn in Romans 5:12-21. The

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<sup>1</sup> Cave, Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice, p. 387.

<sup>2</sup> John 17:21.

<sup>3</sup> John 10:10.

contrast between the two great events in history focused in the two representatives, Adam and Christ, is most striking in bringing out how the atonement was made. Many accept the representative principle who reject substitution. V. Taylor says: "Perhaps the most striking feature of New Testament teaching concerning the representative work of Christ, is the fact that it comes so near, without actually crossing, the bounds of substitutionary doctrine. Paulinism in particular is within a hair's breadth of substitution."<sup>1</sup>

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Jesus is our representative because all believers are united in Christ. (Romans 6:1-8) Since His life is in us, and He is Master now instead of sin, we live a holy life. All the dying, resurrecting, living is "one public, representative, corporate act performed by the Son of God, in which we share as truly as if we had accomplished that atonement ourselves."<sup>2</sup> The idea of partnership between Christians and Christ in crucifixion, resurrection, and present life is one of the principal themes too of Galatians<sup>3</sup> as an antidote to the legal spirit so prevalent there. This truth of co-crucifixion, co-suffering and co-resurrection possible only for believers as the logical effect of the accomplishment of the Head in the Body, the Church, is so well presented by Smeaton that we wonder why the resurrection is so neglected by him as the act completing and making effective the atonement. Even though Hegel's philosophy was utterly different in its real meaning, a statement of his has striking appropriateness: "It is a proof of infinite love that God identified Himself with what was foreign to His nature in order to slay it. This is the signification of the death of Christ."<sup>4</sup> Christ became sin for us by identifying Himself with us. "The union of believers with the Saviour does bear ..... on their participation in the benefits of His substitution." says

<sup>1</sup> V. Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching*, p. 197. Also see pp. 84-90, especially top of p. 87. Representation includes substitution within its scope.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 2:20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. III, p. 93.

Crawford.<sup>1</sup> Martin has three fine insights in relation to our union with Him: "Let the objection to the Atonement about punishing the innocent and allowing the transgressors to escape, be referred back upon the Covenant of grace ... Bring in ... the Scriptural doctrine which teaches us to regard Christ and the Church collectively in their relation to God, as virtually one and indivisible, so far as regards their legal standing and responsibilities; and the objection is .... seen at once to be false .... irrelevant and inept." Again: "The possibility of real atonement absolutely postulates and demands a conjuncture between Him who atones and those for whom His atonement is available." And once more: "He is substituted for us because He is one with us - identified with us, and we with Him."<sup>2</sup> How much the concept of union with and identification with Christ helps to fill out and enlarge the substitutionary principle!

The identification of Jesus with us is more sharply signified by Him in calling Himself the "Son of Man," a title used by Jesus 80 times, and only by Him<sup>3</sup> concerning Himself. Smeaton says it is always a reference to substitution and sin-bearing. It is always, asserts Smeaton, a title of abasement, and does not designate Christ's human side or that He is man. When God called a prophet "son of man," it was to remind him of his meanness and to avoid his self-exaltation.<sup>4</sup> This title is never used after the resurrection, but only during the days of His flesh. It is never used in prayer or in Jesus' capacity as teacher.<sup>5</sup> Its origin is in Psalm 8:4 and Job 25:6, and it is commented on in Philippians 2:6-8. This title shows that the Son of God assumed true humanity, became the second man or second Adam or representative man, so had to be a substitute for sinners. As Son of Man, Christ was the subject of

1 T. J. Crawford, The Mysteries of Christianity, p. 241-2.

2 Martin, The Atonement, pp. 18, 40, 45.

3 Stephen in Acts 7:56 quotes Jesus (Mark 14:62) and John in the Apocalypse 14:14 refers to Daniel 7:13. This is Smeaton's sole mention of this important Daniel passage, (See Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 83). Denney says: "The title, no doubt, goes back primarily to Daniel 7:13," (Jesus and The Gospel, p. 238) and many others agree. Maybe Smeaton avoids it because it is a picture of triumph.

4 This is probably not always true. Wendt agrees however. Wendt, Teaching of Jesus, Vol. II, pp. 139-145.

5 Mark 8:31 contradicts Smeaton's claim here.

prophecy;<sup>1</sup> He was the great sufferer in the psalms and the prophets. The Son of Man had no home; He was disinherited because He bore our sin while here.<sup>2</sup> In John 5:27 and Mark 2:28, Christ is given authority as a reward of His abasement. Luke 19:10 says He came to seek and to save; He does this by His vicarious life and death. In Matthew 11:19 it was part of His humility to be sinless amid the sinful, to enter where God was dishonoured. Smeaton asserts that Jesus clothed Himself with sinless humanity (not as it was in Adam before the fall),<sup>3</sup> and at that moment willingly assumed the sin and curse of His people. He assumed not the flesh of sin, but the likeness of sinful flesh.<sup>4</sup> Some of these distinctions of Smeaton are pointless and absurd, more than tinged with petty scholasticism. Many dogmatic assertions seem completely unwarranted.

Others have said that the Son of Man title refers to the (1) Incarnation, (2) fact that He was man, (3) title of Messiah glorified, (4) second Adam; but none of these are sufficient in themselves, says Smeaton, although they are all included in the understanding that it refers to His "mean" condition as Surety. Grotius agrees with Smeaton's view, but Smeaton's assertions seem to be those that are framed to support a preconceived judgement. A.B. Bruce surely presents a different idea: "The Ideal must be an ideal man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, the Son of men; He must be in His humanity mere man ..... He must be a tempted man, His virtue not a thing of course, but a real battle with sin, a triumph after a bloody struggle over all the forces of moral evil." Again: "He called Himself by preference the Son of Man, to

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 9:12.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 8:20. Most of these deductions are presented with no supporting evidence.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton does not clarify the distinction between Adam's humanity and Christ's

<sup>4</sup> This distinction legitimately is drawn from Romans 8:3-4.



announce to the world His consciousness of brotherhood with men, the humble, homely title rising to His lips as the spontaneous utterance of the human sympathy that filled His heart." Once more: "In these texts ... the title Son of man signifies the sympathetic man ... in other texts the title seems rather to signify the unprivileged man par excellence."<sup>1</sup> A very reasonable assumption!

Smeaton's categorical allegation that the use of "Son of Man" always refers to Christ's abasement, substitution and sin-bearing, does not withstand careful investigation and scrutiny of the varied employment of the phrase. In fact Smeaton's own explanations betray how weak his position is. First Enoch is never mentioned by Smeaton (probably because it is apocryphal) and Daniel 7 is passed by almost completely. He assures us, "Though we can not adduce all the passages where the expression Son of Man occurs, we do not hesitate to affirm that wherever it is found.... it alludes to vicarious punishment."<sup>2</sup> Smeaton recognises allusions to the glory of the Son of Man, but declares they are the result of Christ's mediatorial suffering. This is surely possible. Even though Prof. William Manson recognises three classes of Son of Man sayings - glory, suffering, and present activities - he suggests that the suffering group is basic: "It is not possible that the great expansion of Son of Man doctrine according to which the Son of Man's exaltation (Daniel 7:13-14) is from a human life of suffering on earth originated first in the mind of Jesus himself?"<sup>3</sup> Stevens declares: "I believe ... that it (the title) had Messianic significance for Jesus; that it was a veiled designation of his messiahship."<sup>4</sup> Such Messiahship includes suffering in its scope, but "as Son

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<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce, The Humiliation of Christ, pp. 300, 302, 228.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> G. B. Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament, p. 53, (capitalization according to Stevens).



of Man he conceives himself as head and founder of the Kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> If Smeaton's assertion were less sweeping, it would be more acceptable, for this study has never been productive of uniformity of opinion. The phrase includes clear implications of abasement, but not only that. V. Taylor writes: "The more immediate centre of interest, when Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of Man, is the destiny of suffering and death He is to fulfil ..... This is a complete transformation of the doctrine of the Son of Man."<sup>2</sup> It is unfortunate that Smeaton was not more careful on this issue especially, for here he could have made a very helpful contribution.

### Christ Victor Over Satan

The atonement decided world control by denuding Satan of world dominion.<sup>3</sup> Christ was the heir and owner, but Satan had usurped control of the world. Only the rebellious serve Satan now; for the Holy Spirit shows men that Christ is already the world's King. Satan was not easily vanquished, but his supreme hour of apparent victory,<sup>4</sup> Calvary, was by the atonement transformed into Christ's matchless triumph. Satan had already attempted subtlety in the temptation in the wilderness, seeking to create discord between Christ's two natures and to make Him disobey. He offered Christ the world, then he tried the fury of persecution through the malice of the rulers of the Jews. Actually he was a tool in God's hand, for this malice led to the atonement, where Satan's power was finally broken. Smeaton thus gives a dignified description of this facet of the atonement that many had preferred to ignore because of the patristic and medieval exaggerations of this theme. Aulen in writing on it today has given it a new and sharp twist of emphasis, opposing the "Western"

<sup>1</sup> Stevens, *Op. cit.*, p. 51. Manson remarks: "His interest in the Son of Man himself had a broader basis than is given in the mere correlation of that figure with the future Reign of God." *Jesus the Messiah*, Manson, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> V. Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>3</sup> John 12:31, Matthew 12:29.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 22:53. Aulen's emphasis on Christ's victory over death and Satan echoes this teaching. (See Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor*, pp. 75-76)

or "Latin" theory of which Smeaton is an exponent.

Summary of Smeaton's Atonement Teaching  
and His Atonement Contribution

Summary

If it is true that in order to put across a point of view it is necessary to over-emphasise it, then Smeaton has succeeded in confirming the absolute necessity of the substitutionary emphasis on the doctrine of the atonement. He sees substitution in every part of the Scripture, and it is a defect of his work that so much stretching and manipulating of Scripture passages, in addition to careless handling, has taken place that it is hard to respect his statement as to strict exegesis (see p. 63.) But it is also true that so much evidence has been accumulated that after reading it all, and throwing aside that which is unreasonable or exceedingly doubtful, a residue of doctrine is left that is truly formidable. Especially is this true concerning his volume on the sayings of Jesus, which is a far more integrated and carefully planned work than volume two on the apostles' teaching.

Also, it cannot be denied that Smeaton has built a well-rounded doctrinal structure of the atonement with substitution at the base, the implications and understanding of which helps to enlarge and enrich our knowledge of the Scripture. Smeaton knew the Scriptures and the Fathers, and though he has quoted sources in error, probably from memory, his erudition is obvious. His philological work is accurate as a rule, but his exegetical interpretations are sometimes marred by his definite bias. After sifting through Smeaton's teaching on substitution, sacrifice, active and passive obedience, equality of love and justice, impossibility of absolute forgiveness, reconciliation, union in Christ, Christ our representative Head, wrath of God, victory over Satan, punishment and satisfaction, and the centrality of the atonement, we conclude that here is a good source book for conservative teaching of the doctrine. Nothing has been left out.

Nearly seventy per cent of Smeaton's gospel quotations are from John's gospel. At the time that he wrote and for fifty years after, this gospel had for many become discredited as an authentic and accurate historical source, stemming from the furore raised by the Tübingen school in the first half of the nineteenth century. This attitude is no longer prevalent. In an excellent, well-known work by Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director of the British Museum, there is a recent statement concerning the most up-to-date archeological discoveries: "Scholars must make their account with the fact that we have in the Fourth Gospel the reminiscences by an eye-witness of facts and discourses, often of a more intimate and private character than the public utterances recorded by the Synoptics which formed the staple material of Christian missionaries, expressed very probably in a style acquired by an evangelist over his length of years, but reflecting a direct knowledge which none of the Synoptics could claim."<sup>1</sup> Smeaton's conclusions are more valuable now than when he wrote, yet it must be noted that no distinction of any kind is drawn between the Synoptics and John, Matthew being called the "first" gospel. Most of the work by scholars in establishing sources was not well developed until after Smeaton's day.

Certain deficiencies of Smeaton's atonement teaching are obvious: (1) Complete lack of reference to God being in Christ, already dwelt upon. The too-great separation of the three persons in the Trinity, due to the theorizing scholasticism of Smeaton and his contemporaries (Cunningham, Martin, Dewar, Buchanan etc.) caused not only this serious hiatus, but also caused the teaching on the penal concept to be unnecessarily harsh. (2) The significant bearing of the resurrection on the atonement is virtually neglected. (3) Resurrection

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, The Bible and Modern Scholarship, pp. 24-25. Sir Edwyn Hoskyns in his introduction to The Fourth Gospel sheds great light on this problem. pp. 17-95.

doctrine is expressed two or three times, but even then only as one of the many rewards of merit.<sup>1</sup> that Christ received for His finished work or in connection with the believer's co-resurrection. The emphasis upon reward is difficult to reconcile with the outgoing love of Christ, or the entire Christian outlook. Reward surely is taught in Scripture as a motive, but even considering Hebrews 12:2, it is hardly the correct term to describe Christ's exaltation and its benefits. (4) The considerable amount of stretching Scripture to fit preconceived ideas. (5) Smeaton's paucity of Old Testament references and background for his atonement teaching. (6) His balance in treatment of the doctrine tends also to be characteristic of his theorizing as to the inter-relationships of the Godhead. All is too elaborate, too rigid, too unwieldy, too impersonal, and too unreal. Everything seems "cut and dried," partly because of Smeaton's view on Scripture infallibility which caused him to ignore completely the higher criticism of his day, seeping into Scotland through Robertson Smith and others. (7) Eschatological possibilities in interpretation of atonement doctrine are not expressed, since this field was little explored in Smeaton's day.

However, it is important to point out that these two atonement volumes give a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine, and furnish a complete source book on all atonement passages in the New Testament Scriptures. Here is a very complete analysis of the teachings of Jesus on this vital subject. Most of Smeaton's philological work substantially justifies his position on the doctrine, and is therefore a great source of strength to those who believe and teach as he does.

When we seek to arrive at Smeaton's specific contribution to theological

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Dewar gives the following reasons justifying substitution: "(1) God approved and allowed it. (2) Christ freely consented. (3) Christ had the power to do it. (4) Christ received great reward for this substitution (Hebrews 12:12)." Dewar, The Nature, Reality, and Efficacy of the Atonement pp. 269-273. This kind of reasoning is cold, and Smeaton frequently writes this way.

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thought, four strong points can be stressed. (1) In spite of the fact that Smeaton was a child of his day and attitude, he was a step on the way to a less stiff scholasticism. He was bound by his theological concepts, but he acted at times as if he wished he could break over. He did not express the doctrine of reprobation. He understood and taught that the love of God was supreme, and rightly emphasized His justice as a part of His love. Smeaton was in between the position of men like Shedd, Cunningham, Dewar, and men such as Denney, Orr, Dale, and Mozley. (2) Smeaton's exegesis of so many New Testament atonement passages gives strength to his orthodox position on substitution, forcing those with a contrary view to do a great amount of "explaining away." (3) Also these volumes could well be a source book of various views of the atonement, although it is true that an inadequate picture is given of Schleiermacher's position. (4) Smeaton's comprehensiveness in covering just about every known emphasis brings out the "various lights" of an infinite work of God. It is well to close this chapter by quoting along this line two writers of that day, one a "liberal," the other a conservative.

"May not each one of these theories be a partial answer to a question ... as wide as humanity .... the various lights in which we ought to view a transaction so momentous must be practically infinite."<sup>1</sup> "Every prominent heresy as to the nature of the atonement ... embraces and emphasizes ... an important truth ... But... it is a heresy .. because it either puts a subordinate principle into the place of that which is central and fundamental, or because it puts one side of the truth for the whole, denying or ignoring all besides the fractional truth presented..... the truth revealed in the Scriptures is so many-sided in its aspects, and so vast in its relation, and our habits of thought because of sin are so one-sided and narrow, that...the mind of any

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<sup>1</sup> J. J. Lias, The Atonement, p. 69.

church in any single age fails to take in practically and sharply more than one side of a truth at a time, while other aspects and relations are either denied or neglected."<sup>1</sup> With these we must express strong agreement, and Smeaton here has much to contribute.

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<sup>1</sup> A.A. Hodge, The Atonement, pp. 17-18.



## CHAPTER V

## DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"The doctrine of the Spirit is almost entirely ignored. The representatives of modern theology ... have almost wholly abandoned it."<sup>1</sup> Even though some splendid works on the Third Person have been written since the time of Smeaton, and there has been considerable recent continental discussion on the Spirit, those words of his, unfortunately, are just as true practically to-day. The Holy Spirit has been rightly called "The Forgotten Person."<sup>2</sup> Many deny His personality, says Smeaton, and even seek to ignore His supernatural agency, making His person and work only figurative.<sup>3</sup> Orr would agree when he writes: "The denial of the Holy Spirit ... may fitly be described as the primal heresy."<sup>4</sup>

Many who have written on the Holy Spirit deplore as Smeaton does the lack of comprehensive treatment of this doctrine. Kuyper in his great work begins: "Special treatises on the Person of the Holy Spirit are comparatively few, and systematic treatment of His Work is still more uncommon."<sup>5</sup> Gore adds: "It is something difficult to account for, almost all down the history of the Church, that the Holy Spirit is comparatively little spoken of except at a few moments of controversy."<sup>6</sup> Robinson complains: "Why is it that there are so many books about the Holy Spirit, and so few that help us towards a

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Henry W. Frost, Who Is the Holy Spirit?, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> This is widely true in the British pulpit to-day, if the writer of this thesis can judge from many personal conversations with ministers and office-bearers in England and Scotland.

<sup>4</sup> James Orr, Revelation and Inspiration, p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Kuyper, The Work of the Holy Spirit, p. IX.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Gore, The Holy Spirit in the Church, p. 118.

real understanding of the doctrine?"<sup>1</sup> A viewpoint such as these caused Smeaton to compile an "authoritative treatise" on the Holy Spirit. A reviewer of this book remarks: "To direct the view of many to the great scriptural groundwork as well as the vast ecclesiastical unanimity upon this great central truth is a very laudable ambition."<sup>2</sup>

### The Personality of the Holy Spirit

Smeaton asserts the divine personality of the Holy Spirit against the Sabellian or modalistic heresy on one side which calls the Spirit merely an influence, and the Arian heresy on the other side which denies the deity of the Spirit and calls Him a creature. Smeaton accuses the German theological school of strong bias and exegetical ineptitude in its claim that expressions about the Spirit found in Scripture mean nothing more than an "abstract quality," or are instances of "tropical language," and of designating the Holy Spirit as simply the "common spirit of the Christian Church"<sup>3</sup> or "the common Spirit of the Christian Society."<sup>4</sup> Smeaton says that such a judgement is absolutely foreign to the rest of the simple, natural straightforward prose style of the Biblical writers, who have uniformly represented the Spirit as a Person. In the fight against the Gnostic tendency to personalize divine operations, it is certain the apostles would have been careful not to "resort to rhetorical personification"<sup>5</sup> of the Holy Spirit; they actually regarded Him as a Person. In passages where impersonal things are given personal qualities (John 3:8, the wind bloweth, Hebrews 12:24, Abel's blood speaketh, I Corinthians 13:1-8, Love never fails) these expressions are single,

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<sup>1</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> British and Foreign Evangelical Review, Vol XXXII, pp. 182-183.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., pp. 102-3. This is Schleiermacher's consistent appellation.

<sup>4</sup> H. R. Machintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Smeaton, Ibid, p. 103.

figurative expressions, vividly depicting unmistakable personifications and are in distinct contrast with the uniform representation of the Spirit's personality throughout the Bible.

In facing the Germany of his day, Smeaton claims that that country seemed to have entirely abandoned the whole field of the Holy Spirit because Sabellianism and Sacramentalism held sway.<sup>1</sup> He mentions three principal conceptions moving the German mind: (1) The school of Baur and Strauss alleged that Christianity had outlived itself and must give way to "a new and spiritualized form which disengages the idea from the shell of the historical manifestation."<sup>2</sup> (2) One group that opposed Baur held carefully to ecclesiastically given forms. (3) The third trend "continued at one with rationalism," but sought to put more spirit into its application. This "mediating school" had its teaching embodied in the exceptional genius of Schleiermacher whose theology centered in the theme "communion of life with the Redeemer." Christ was central, yet nothing was said about the work of the Holy Spirit, for His personality was not recognized. Schleiermacher clearly states: "The expression 'Holy Spirit' must be understood to mean the vital unity of the Christian fellowship as a moral personality; and this ... we might denote by the phrase, its common spirit." And again: "the conception of the Holy Spirit as the common spirit of the church."<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher claimed that his doctrine satisfied the demands of Christian piety and Church doctrine, for the "intention of the doctrine, he urges, is to affirm that 'nothing less than the Divine being was in Christ, and dwells in the Christian

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<sup>1</sup> It is true that Kahnis is the only one to write a work on the Holy Spirit, Die Lehre vom Heiligen Geiste, in 1847. Smeaton says this was only half finished. Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 396 and footnote pp. 396-7.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, pp. 535, 598.

Church as its unifying Spirit."<sup>1</sup> He further said that "every Christian must be a Christ if the Spirit as such were in every individual." The Spirit is related to the Church as a whole as the Deity in Christ is related to His humanity. Smeaton adds, "The writer, with all his vast powers, plainly knew not what he said, nor whereof he affirmed."<sup>2</sup>

Even though Smeaton considered Schleiermacher a great spirit, and maintained that generally his school loyally adheres to historic Christianity, he directs attention to three glaring faults: (1) There is no distinction between the work of Christ and work of the Spirit, for there is no true doctrine of the Spirit. "A Sabellian view of the Spirit naturally leads men to the denial of the supernatural in any form."<sup>3</sup> (2) Their watchword is Christian consciousness or the testimony of the Holy Spirit; yet there is no personal Spirit, no regeneration, and this consciousness is made the test and judge of Scripture. There is no Christian consciousness without a sense of sin, but Schleiermacher denies the fall and sin, asserting that no justice of God or propitiation is needed. Jesus is not the eternal Son, but a person inhabited by God in a wholly unique way. Religion is feeling, and the feeling is the standard, norm, and authority. (3) The Holy Spirit did not produce Scripture by human agents, so any amount of free-thinking on the Scriptures is to be desired. Poor views of the origin and authority of Scripture are concomitant with defective understanding of the Holy Spirit. Smeaton insists that:

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<sup>1</sup> H. R. Mackintosh, Op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 401.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 402. Richard Rothe, a disciple of Schleiermacher, but who has his own originality, teaches a theistic supernaturalism that still allows him to state that "the Holy Spirit and the glorified Christ are one and the same. The Spirit is not an hypostasis distinct from the ascended redeemer." G.P. Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 518.

"The doctrine of the Spirit not less than the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ's merits, is THE ARTICLE OF A STANDING OR FALLING CHURCH, and without the recognition of it no religious prosperity exists or can exist."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton, maintaining that the Scriptures were not written to overbear the rebellious, but to feed responsive minds and honest hearts, presents the usual Scripture evidences to prove the Spirit's personality. In Genesis 1:2, "Spirit (Ruach) denotes a Breath, a Wind, and also an intelligent thinking being. The designation 'the Spirit of God' denotes two persons."<sup>2</sup> Also Job 26:13, 33:4, Genesis 2:7, Psalm 104:30 are mentioned as confirmatory evidence. Smeaton says that the Spirit is obviously portrayed as a divine Person throughout the Old Testament. Smeaton's apparent limitations concerning Old Testament knowledge, plus his tendency to "conserve" accepted doctrine against the encroachments of criticism have caused his Scripture findings in the Old Testament to be too brief, conventional and inadequate to prove his contention, but his statement that "the divine personality of the Spirit as we have clearly seen, was not less known and not less recognized in the one economy than in the other"<sup>3</sup> is being substantiated by Old Testament study on the Holy Spirit in this century.<sup>4</sup>

The New Testament evidence is much more abundant and convincing, and Smeaton calls attention to the usual attributes of personality that are obviously given to the Holy Spirit, and the distinctions between Him and the other members of the Trinity (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13-14, Acts 5:3, 8:29, 10:19, 16:7, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 4:4-6, 4:30). The difference

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 9. Murphy in his commentary A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis, disagrees: "It is here intimated that God is a spirit. For 'the Spirit of God' is equivalent to 'God who is a spirit'." see p. 36. (James G. Murphy) To the writer the presence of two distinct persons in Genesis 1:2 and Job 34:4 is not "express" or "obvious." Also see Snaith, I Believe in ...., pp. 100-101 as to his distinction between God the Holy Spirit and Spirit of God.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> See H.B. Swete, A.C. Downer, W.L. Walker, Norman Snaith, Paul Volz and others.

between the Old and New Covenants is seen to be in the supply of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:16-18) causing the New Testament to be called the "ministration of the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:8).

The personality of the Holy Spirit is to Smeaton essential for any real life in the Church, and basic to his entire teaching. Many of his day and today would heartily agree. J.S. Candlish writes: "The doctrine of the Holy Spirit being a divine Person ... is one that can not only be proved from Scripture as a revealed truth, but also ... verified in the religious experience of Christians."<sup>1</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson represents many theologians of this century in stating: "the frank and open confession of the personality of the Holy Spirit, a personality better known to us, far better known, than that of Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

#### Relation Within the Trinity

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Very closely related to the doctrine of personality is that of Trinity, involved in all considerations of the Holy Spirit, and though the mystery of

the Three-in-One is almost impossible to comprehend<sup>3</sup> it is nevertheless "the very essence and compendium of Christianity itself."<sup>4</sup> Smeaton outlines the faith of the Church concerning the Trinity and summarizes it by a postulate concerning divine works: the Father is the source from which every operation emanates; the Son is the medium through which it is performed; the Holy Spirit is the executive carrying the operation into effect.<sup>5</sup> In Vol II of The

<sup>1</sup> The Work of the Holy Spirit, p. 33. Also see Joseph Parker, The Paraclete; A.J. Gordon, The Ministry of the Spirit, Buchanan, Dewar and many others.

<sup>2</sup> The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit, p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Norman H. Snaith, Vincent Taylor, Howard Watkin-Jones, Harold Roberts. p. 107. Dr. Roberts says: "There is probably no theological doctrine which produces so much consternation and confusion in the mind of the ordinary man as the doctrine of the Trinity. It seems to bristle with inconsistencies, to create problems without solving any and to obscure the grand simplicities of the Christian faith." However this essay proceeds to prove the opposite of the view quoted.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 4 (2nd edition).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pp. 3-4. Also p. 134.



Atonement, Smeaton also alludes to the Holy Spirit (in Hebrews 9:14-15) as the executive of all Christ's actions.<sup>1</sup> Though A.A. Hodge disagrees strongly with such a concept,<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge does say that the Holy "Spirit is the executive of the Godhead."<sup>3</sup> What A.A. Hodge probably objected to was a sentence such as this: "The Godhead dwelling in Him made all due communications to His manhood by the Holy Ghost."<sup>4</sup>

This does seem to be "beyond the bounds of our possible knowledge," yet there is considerable Scripture testimony about the work of the Spirit in and on the Son. Isaiah presents the Holy Spirit as the anointer of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, 61:1),<sup>5</sup> cojoined with the Son from the moment of incarnation (Isaiah 48:16), resting on Christ from the beginning, and giving Him unction. Smeaton separates the unction of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit into three "grades" successively imparted at the incarnation, baptism, and ascension.<sup>6</sup> Luke 1:35 describes the supernatural conception, indicating that the Holy Spirit produced Jesus' humanity sinless to exclude possibility of "transmitted corruption" and guilt from Adam. The Holy Spirit was the link between Christ's deity and humanity, "perpetually imparting full consciousness of His personality" as the Son of God, (Luke 2:49, John 13:3). The Trinity appeared at the baptism of Christ when the Father anointed the Son with the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> Against Unitarian remonstrances, Smeaton asserts that Jesus needed the teaching and guidance of the Spirit because He was man as well as God, both natures being distinct but united. The Holy Spirit guided Jesus to understand,

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1 Smeaton, Atonement, Vol. II, p. 372.

2 Presbyterian Review, Vol. IV, 1883, p. 454.

3 Systematic Theology, Charles Hodge, Vol. I, p. 529. Also see Kuyper, Op. cit., pp. 93-96, and A.J. Gordon, The Ministry of the Spirit, pp. 75, 109.

4 Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 134.

5 Ibid., p. 37.

6 Ibid., pp. 128-145.

7 On the Holy Spirit's anointing at baptism, see H.B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, pp. 260, 388-9. Also Swete's book, The Holy Spirit in the New Testament, pp. 55-62.

be pure, and obey, and gave victory to His human nature at every point, especially in the temptation (Luke 4:1, 14). The Holy Spirit culminated His work with Jesus by raising Him from the dead (I Peter 3:18).<sup>1</sup> The third degree of Christ's unction was reserved for His exaltation (Acts 2:33, Psalm 45:7). The "shedding forth" of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was an ascension gift for the purpose of erecting and organising the Church.<sup>2</sup> In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist had presented Jesus as the one who was to dispense the Spirit, fulfilling, according to Smeaton, the prophecies of Psalm 68:18 (he wrote 68:10), 45:7 and Zechariah 12:10.<sup>3</sup>

Smeaton, Gordon and Kuyper and many others say that it was Christ's mission to reveal the Father, and the Holy Spirit's to reveal Christ. Ewald has another way of putting it: "Everywhere, and by all He says and does, Christ points most vividly back to God and forward to the Holy Spirit, and has become the only true bond between both, and must remain so for ever."<sup>4</sup>

As Rothe and others allowed obliteration of the distinction between Christ and the Spirit in their thinking and writing, Smeaton fought for their separateness. Paul had not known Christ in the flesh, and so received his revelation by a unique inward communication of the Spirit. This explains Paul's apprehension of the joint mission of Christ and the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:17: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." Smeaton holds to the distinction between Christ and the

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:11 is a more definite substantiation.

<sup>2</sup> This is another example of a carefully worked out plan too replete with nice distinctions. The idea of three grades of power or unction does not seem to be scripturally warranted at all, but is more like a scholastic scheme, to which Smeaton occasionally succumbs. Yet, if he means that the guidance and protection of the Spirit was given at incarnation, power of the Spirit at Baptism, and ability to give forth the Spirit at the ascension, the theory is tenable.

<sup>3</sup> This he affirms against Schmid's allegation that this word of John the Baptist was unknown to the Old Testament prophets. (C.F. Schmid, Biblical Theology of the New Testament, pp. 146-7). Schmid's allegations seems to have stronger justification, for the verses quoted by Smeaton are certainly not conclusive as predicting Jesus' dispensing of the Spirit. John the Baptist does not seem to be conscious of fulfilling prophecy.

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Ewald, Old and New Testament Theology, p. 347.

Spirit in this verse, but Rees says that Paul distinctly identifies Christ with the Spirit as well as in I Corinthians 15:45.<sup>1</sup> Smeaton is confident that Paul's testimony to the deity and personality of the Spirit is overwhelming (Acts 20:23, 28:25, Romans 15:19, Galatians 4:4-6). Schleiermacher's Sabellianism is characterised by Smeaton as a perversion; Schleiermacher varies this position "in his own ingenious way" by saying that God is the Father as He creates, Son as He redeems, and Holy Spirit as He unites Himself to the Christian Church. To the writer, Schleiermacher wrestles very honestly with the doctrine of Trinity, showing how easily the Sabellian heresy may be held. He maintains that a true dualism is seldom adhered to, but that either unity or trinity is subordinate ("no equality is possible between unity and trinity").<sup>2</sup> Smeaton tends to emphasize strongly the trinity-separation of persons.

Smeaton states that the Church has always believed in the Trinity, and has rightly maintained that belief in it is essential to the individual Christian as well as the Church. "Without it, Christianity would at once collapse."<sup>3</sup> All true theologians simply conserve it. It is the ultimate ground of every truth, the keystone of the arch of salvation.<sup>4</sup>

Smeaton's treatment of the doctrine of procession is conventional.

John 15:26 is the key verse on which the discussion is based. Smeaton quotes Stowell as expressing the thoughts of those who object to the procession of

1 Thoman Rees, The Holy Spirit in Thought and Experience, pp. 98-99. Also see H. B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the New Testament, pp. 300-302, for a very fair discussion. Stevens has an excellent argument also. (G. B. Stevens, Theology of the New Testament, p. 443). Both Swete and Stevens agree that Christ and the Spirit are distinct in this verse. Bousset, Harnack, Inge, and E. F. Scott all identify Christ with the Spirit. See R. Birch Hoyle, The Holy Spirit in St. Paul, p. 19.

2 Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, pp. 742-751.

3 Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 5.

4 Such sweeping statements are frequent in Smeaton's work and cause a judgement like that of Glenn G. Atkins in Modern Religious Cults and Movements: "The whole scheme of religion as it has come down to us on the Protestant side till within the last fifty years was at once compactly interwrought, strongly supported and unexpectedly vulnerable. The integrity of any one part of its line depended upon the integrity of every other part ... If anything should challenge the scientific or historical accuracy of the book of Genesis, the doctrine of original sin would have either to be discarded or recast. If ... discarded or recast, the accepted interpretations of the Atonement went with it." p. 38-39.

the Holy Spirit as from both the Father and the Son because "they are analyses of human thoughts or words, not developments of divine realities."<sup>1</sup> This attitude of Stowell's seems legitimate and well defended. Schleiermacher aptly insists that "procession, too, is a relation of dependence, though meant to be a different one from being begotten, in spite of the fact that no one has ever succeeded in making clear what the difference between the two is."<sup>2</sup> Yet Smeaton maintains it is the teaching of the entire Church, and at the foundation of the unity and distinction in the Godhead; to him the negation of procession is inconceivable. But he does admit that although procession from the Father and Son is Scripture truth, it is less fundamental and should not have disturbed the peace of the Greek and Latin Churches which broke apart over this issue in 1054.<sup>3</sup> As it is, Smeaton declares, the Greek Church has lost greatly by her one-sided view (procession of the Spirit from the Father only) and "has become much of a fossil, untouched by any of the reformations or revivals that renovated the Western Church."<sup>4</sup>

### The Work of the Holy Spirit

Smeaton shows how the Bible teaches that man is absolutely impotent for good since the Holy Spirit's presence was forfeited by the fall (I Corinthians 2:14, Romans 8:7-8, I Corinthians 12:3, John 14:17, 15:4). That man was originally, though mutably, "replenished" with the Spirit, is proved not only by Genesis 2:7, says Smeaton, but also by the restoration of the Spirit by the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, which transpired after the resurrection (John 20:

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<sup>1</sup> William Henry Stowell, The Work of the Spirit, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Schleiermacher, Op. cit., p. 743.

<sup>3</sup> See H.B. Swete's splendid book, History of the Doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Spirit, which shows how unnecessary the split was.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 327.

21-22), implying that the first Adam possessed the Spirit until lost by the fall.<sup>1</sup> Smeaton presents three unique presuppositions involved in the fall of man: (1) The Holy Spirit withdrew from the human heart as one of the penalties of sin, leaving only the ruins of the temple of the flesh. (2) The Holy Spirit was replaced by an evil spirit, forcing man to become a captive of Satan. (3) The image of God in Adam was replaced by entire corruption of man's nature, and he is now prone to evil, dead in sin, and accordingly neither able or willing to return to God.<sup>2</sup> A dim outline of the moral law remains in his heart along with an accusing conscience, but he prefers wrong things, shadowy, speculative, superficial and sensuous, instead of the "spiritual and humbling discoveries which are called forth by the divine word."<sup>3</sup> Man has free will but it is diseased, and thus exercises its freedom against the will of God. In answering Nicodemus' questions (John 3:3-6), Jesus affirms a change of the whole man, regeneration, indispensably necessary. Smeaton declares that, according to Jesus, only the Holy Spirit can impart the life of God. Christ's mediatorial bearing of our sins enabled the Holy Spirit to return with fullness of grace and power. The promise of Genesis 22:18 and the fulfillment recorded by Paul in Galatians 3:14 are connected by Smeaton as proof. He also states that Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John all took "for granted ... the general corruption of man's nature, and refer to the Spirit as the originator and source of all

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<sup>1</sup> This is quite clearly theoretical. Smeaton presents no authority or evidence and there are many who could not assume all the "implications" that he does. However, the interpretation of Genesis, 2:7 is quite accurate, and Driver suggests John 20:22 as a spiritual interpretation. (S.R. Driver, The Book of Genesis, p. 38).

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, pp. 17-18. Barth says: "Our enmity towards God - which is to be seen in our hearty goodwill towards any self-discovered theory about God, or towards this or that religious, ethical view of the universe that is not excluded - the evil that we do: this precisely is our hostility toward Grace." Karl Barth, The Holy Ghost and the Christian Life, p. 29).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 178.



the saving, sanctifying, and comforting influences which Christians experience."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton designates John 16:8-11 as the most conclusive passage in Scripture regarding the Spirit's work in conversion. In this context the Holy Spirit is convincing the world of truths hitherto unknown, that: unbelief is sin, true righteousness has been "wrought out" for men by Christ's atonement, and Satan has been judged.<sup>2</sup> Unbelief in Christ is the supreme sin, for it is a rejection of reconciliation, and it makes the person and all his works evil. Unbelief always produces new sins. But only the Holy Spirit can convince of the enormity of this sin. When man finally understands the horror of his sin, to preclude utter despair, the Holy Spirit shows him the imputed righteousness which Christ, by the atonement, has provided for him. Then man realises that he is delivered from a defeated Satan, and is now completely free (John 8:36).

Smeaton avows that conversion is always the same, instantaneous, embryonically perfect, completely supernatural. The whole soul of man is regenerate: the author is the Spirit,<sup>3</sup> the pattern is Christ, the means is the Word. Smeaton seems here to identify regeneration with conversion, which many would distinguish between. Selby expresses a different conclusion: "Conversion points to the change in a man's external conduct, which may be the antecedent, the collateral process, or the fruit of his regeneration, and which seems to hinge upon his own will."<sup>4</sup> A. Kuyper, great Calvinist theologian, divides regeneration into three states: "The first of these three, viz., the faculty of faith, is implanted in the first stage of regeneration - i.e., in quickening; the power

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, pp. 61-62. A large assumption - that all the apostles took man's corruption for granted.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander MacLaren has real insights on these verses, The Holy of Holies, see pp. 123-134, 243-254, 267-302.

<sup>3</sup> Dewar declares: "When the Holy Spirit purposes to subdue the sinner to God, and to convert him, His purpose He infallibly accomplishes." D. Dewar, The Holy Spirit, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> T. G. Selby, The Holy Spirit and Christian Privilege, p. 85.



of faith is imparted in the second stage of regeneration - i.e., in conversion; and the working of faith is wrought in the third stage - i.e., in sanctification."<sup>1</sup> He teaches that only God, the Holy Spirit, can accomplish the first stage.

Continuing his argument, Smeaton declares that the human will is the subject of conversion, and aids in no way to bring about the result. The synergism in the opposite reasoning - that the human will is a co-operating third cause (along with the Holy Spirit and the Word) seems to exalt man's nature but really paves the way for deeper degradation. There seems to be a hiatus in Smeaton's thinking here. He says, "the human will aids in no way," yet in another place;<sup>2</sup> "There must be a consent of all ... parties... faith on the sinner's part must be viewed as his approval ...." The human will, in assenting, co-operates and is a third cause. This is true even though faith is a gift of God. J.S. Candlish argues: "But ... when men are led to faith in Christ, this is not due to their own will, but to the grace of God...The will is indeed exercised in the act of faith and repentance; it is a voluntary act by which the soul turns from sin and trusts in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners. But this act it is moved and enabled to perform by the influence of the grace of God."<sup>3</sup> This is an example of the same kind of double-talk that Smeaton found necessary in facing this problem. Now he goes on to say that the Holy Spirit introduces the necessary new supernatural element into fallen humanity. High motives and moral suasion are not enough, for they throw man back on himself. "Of the fruits of Naturalism, whether it be Pelagianism, Arminianism, Socinianism, Rationalism, we have seen enough in the history of the Church to be convinced that it does not tend, with all its praise of man's ability and dignity, to

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<sup>1</sup> A. Kuyper, Op. cit., pp. 318, 320.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Atonement, Vol. I, pp. 321-322.

<sup>3</sup> J.S. Candlish, The Work of the Holy Spirit, p. 68.

elevate our race."<sup>1</sup>

This may well be true, yet it is difficult to accept Smeaton's Calvinistic position of man's total inability; so theological history shows as in the above quotation. Smeaton points out that the problem started way back with the position of the Greek church, epitomized in the words of the godly Chrysostom: "God draws, but He draws the willing one."<sup>2</sup> The Greeks, surrounded by the fatalistic Gnostics and Manichees, left the paradox of God's grace and man's free-will unsolved. In the West, Augustine had been prepared by God to cope with the problem thoroughly, for as the champion of the doctrine of special efficacious grace, he ascribed all to the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, nothing to man's natural power. Smeaton eulogizes Augustine as a "meeting-place where the streams of the past united, and were sent forth anew to fertilize the future."<sup>3</sup> So powerful was Augustine's polemic that Pelagius (a natural, unregenerate, though morally earnest man, said Smeaton) was discredited, but Cassian rose up with the "middle way" that came to be called semi-Pelagianism, claiming that man, with his own natural powers, can take the first step toward conversion, which the Holy Spirit completes. This was not repudiated effectively until the Synod of Orange in 529.

Smeaton acclaimed the Reformation as a period in which more full and explicit testimony was given to the Holy Spirit than had been uttered since the apostolic age. The amazing uniformity of the Protestant leaders' teachings was evidenced in the confessional documents which signified the collective conviction that since the fall man is absolutely unable to do good; accordingly regeneration and conversion are completely the work of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 329.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 333.

Melancthon was the principal leader in the beginning of a declension that soon transpired, for under the prodding of Erasmus, he changed his opinions and wrote that the three causes in conversion were the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the human will. The Formula Concordiae wisely settled this controversy in the tenet: Conversion has its efficient cause only in the operation of the Holy Spirit; man neither effects nor co-operates in it. After conversion, the mind begins to co-operate. (A. Kuyper would agree to this).

The Unitarian movement, begun by Socinus, was obviously naturalistic, so gained no foothold in the Church; but Arminianism, which is identical with semi-Pelagianism, "insinuated itself into the Reformed Churches," and, according to Smeaton, became a formidable power.<sup>1</sup> Arminius taught that the operation of the Spirit was always resistable, His work was only moral suasion, and denied that the Holy Spirit confers the gift of faith or even renews or inclines the will of man; He merely assists him. Amyraldus distinguished between natural and moral power to believe in Christ. He said that the sinner had the natural but not the moral power; yet the natural could never be exerted. The end result is sure to be Pelagianism, Smeaton avers. He feels that any deviation from Calvinistic doctrine is "disastrous."<sup>2</sup> Smeaton deplores the fact that later Jonathan Edwards, a "giant of theology," because he was not widely enough read, became an adherent of Amyraldus' heresy, changing the "could not" of the Reformed theologians to "would not" in regard to repentance and belief. Smeaton maintains that this Amyraldian distinction is senseless, for man is unable in understanding as well as will (I Corinthians 2:14), he is completely corrupt (Romans 8:7-8 - "cannot" stressed), and all unbelief is rooted in natural depravity. "The true object is gained, not by magnifying

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<sup>1</sup> It still is.

<sup>2</sup> Amyraldus (Moses Amyrant) sought to bring Calvinists and Lutherans together. According to the minutes of the Westminster Committee meeting, his doctrine was not meant to be excluded from the Confession. See Hastings: E.R.E., Vol I, pp. 404-406.

natural ability and shutting men up to will, but by exhibiting the two sides of the incomprehensible mystery. They are both true; (free agency and inability) and all that theology effects, is to conserve the mystery."<sup>1</sup>

The Puritans opposed Arminian and Romish practices, commanded such fine minds as Howe, Owen, and Goodwin, had "nothing in their spirituality false or unhealthy." Their doctrine of the Spirit was used to lead men to Christ, not to withdraw men's minds from Him.<sup>2</sup> They taught that the work of the Spirit in regeneration was not identical with baptism. The English non-conformists who succeeded the Puritans were weak on the work of the Spirit because of their emphasis on baptismal regeneration.<sup>3</sup> Smeaton asserts that in 1775 Junckheim<sup>4</sup> wrote a work from which German Protestantism has never recovered. The Scriptures were honoured, but the Holy Spirit was left out, so, practically speaking, the Holy Spirit and supernatural revelation were discarded. The Word of God is a philosophy. Man resists grace by suppressing good thought. This theory combines Pelagianism, Arminianism, Amyraldism, and Naturalism all in one. It was easily refuted by Starr, Tittman, and Reinhard, but its endorsement by Ernesti was fatal, and led to Rationalism.

With this historical background, it is not surprising that Smeaton is so insistent on the Calvinistic position, nor surprising that he has difficulty in rigidly maintaining it. Joseph Parker calls the Calvinist theory the doctrine, the Arminian its application. Is not that practically what happens in preaching?<sup>5</sup>

1 Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 384.

2 Ibid, p. 365.

3 Ibid, p. 397. This is Smeaton's only mention of baptismal regeneration, except where he describes Lutheran teaching: "Regeneration is identified with baptism."

4 It is difficult to see how Smeaton felt justified in attributing such monumental influence to Junckheim. It was hard to discover any reference to Junckheim but he is briefly referred to in K.R. Hagenbach, History of Christian Doctrine, Vol. II p. 365, as the author of Von dem Übernatürlichen in den Gnadenwirkungen, which Smeaton mentions, (p. 376). Hagenbach spelled Junckhem without the "c". Smeaton merely mentions Ernesti and Michaelis - probably far more influential as precursors of rationalism than Junckheim, who was not to be found in any biographical dictionaries, including two major German ones.

5 Joseph Parker, The Paraclete, p. 139 ff.

As concomitants of regeneration, the Spirit replenishes all mental powers, says Smeaton, changes the will to desire to yield to and obey Christ, and corrects, teaches, purifies and comforts the conscience. All men, because of sin, belong to the wrong family, Satan's, until the Holy Spirit in His work of adoption<sup>1</sup> makes Christ and His people one. The Spirit accomplishes our mystical union to Christ, and confirms our adoption as sons, a witness that ultimately inculcates assurance.<sup>2</sup>

Succeeding regeneration and adoption, the Holy Spirit makes the union individual. vital and causes believers to advance in holiness by His sanctifying operations as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Ephesians 1:17), the indwelling Spirit (2 Timothy 1:14), and the Spirit who leads the sons of God (Romans 8:14). Romans 8 manifests the doctrine of the Spirit fully developed, and Smeaton elaborates how the Spirit makes the spiritual life increasingly effective in the believer as He imparts the spiritual mind (8:9), counteracts the law of sin and death, gives power to resist and victory over sin (8:13), creates a desire to do God's will, constantly helps the believer in prayer (8:26), and assures him eternal life (8:20).<sup>3</sup>

As the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, the Holy Spirit enables regenerate men to know and discern sin, to see<sup>4</sup> themselves as they are, God in His holiness, Christ in His perfection. Man now can perceive the atonement clearly, understand and apply Scripture, and constantly grow in his knowledge of Christ and desire for Spiritual things. The natural man only thinks he understands. The Spirit through the Word reproduces the life of Christ in all believers, and this results

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1 "The spirit of adoption springs as naturally from the Spirit's work in applying the gospel, as the spirit of bondage from the Spirit's work in applying the law." James Buchanan, The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit, p. 463.

2 "The new creation, produced in regeneration is a permanent production." Dewar, Op. cit., p. 139.

3 Smeaton, Holy Spirit, pp. 78-82.

4 "The Holy Spirit is the enlightener of God's people." Dewar, Ibid, p. 90.

in abundant fruit (John 15:1-8, Ephesians 3:20).<sup>1</sup> As the indwelling Spirit<sup>1a</sup> (John 14:16-17, 2 Timothy 1:14, I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19), He does not impart any portion of His own essence, but confers gifts upon His hosts, and impresses God's image on believers.<sup>2</sup> As leader of the sons of God,<sup>3</sup> the Spirit moves the Christian to receive doctrine, and to do his duty (Ezekiel 36:27). When the soul is weak, the Spirit helps; when indifferent, the Spirit re-animates, quickens, and restores joy (Romans 14:17); and when the soul is cold, prayerless, inactive, the Spirit re-animates it. Smeaton briefly mentions the baptism of the Spirit as Christ's promise to His Church, (Act 1:5) confirming the light, purification, warmth, and the spreading abroad of God's love that would result from the Spirit's indwelling of the Christian.<sup>4</sup>

In formulating the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christian Ethics,<sup>5</sup> Smeaton claims that Christian Ethics and Philosophical Morals "cannot contradict each other in their ultimate decisions" even though both "start from totally different spheres."<sup>6</sup> Christian ethics cannot be poured into a philosophic mould without injuring both, for "philosophic morals belong to us as reasonable beings; Christian ethics belong to us as redeemed men."<sup>7</sup>

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1 Smeaton, Holy Spirit, pp. 223-226.

1a How far away all this is from Ritschl's view. He deplores neglect of teaching on the Holy Spirit but "Believers, according to Ritschl, are those who have adopted the purpose of God, not those in whom the Spirit of God dwells and who receive from the Spirit all their power to know and do God's will. The ground of this error, we may reasonably conjecture, is to be found in Ritschl's comparatively superficial thought of sin." Mackintosh, Op. cit., pp. 175-6.

2 How can the Spirit indwell the believer without imparting His "essence"? His essence is life, love, power! Mystical union gives these to the believer. Smeaton draws too fine a distinction here!

3 Frost has a remarkable chapter on the Spirit's sovereignty; calls Him an autocrat. H.W. Frost, Who is the Holy Spirit?, pp. 28-37.

4 Smeaton, Holy Spirit, pp. 240-241. This entire subject of the leading of the Spirit was new to the second edition, as well as the perfunctory mention of the baptism of the Spirit. The latter doctrine receives too summary a treatment. Smeaton quotes Matthew 3:11 on baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire, and has a considerable peroration on the beneficial effects of fire, completely overlooking the concept of judgment as suggested by verse 12.

5 Apparently this discussion springs from Rothe's discussion in Theological Ethics. See Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, p. 517.

6 Smeaton, Op. Cit., p. 241.

7 Ibid., p. 242.



In Smeaton's opinion the Unitarian outlook results in a code of ethical rules apart from Christ. The Pelagian ethics are lax because there is no renewing work of the Holy Spirit, and as there is no high theory above practice, theory and practice merge. The whole ethical system of the Roman Church "oscillates between bondage and spiritual pride," but is never ushered into liberty because of the constant exhortation to merit salvation.<sup>1</sup> A Christian's ethics depend ultimately on his attitude to the Person of Christ, for His human life is the Christian's "realised ideal of ethics." The believer is engrafted into Christ by the Holy Spirit, and the resultant union and communion gives rise to our ethical action, the natural fruit of salvation by grace. Love is the principle of unity in Christian ethics, distinguishing them from all other ethics.

Smeaton cautions that even though sanctification is promised (Ezekiel 36:27) and commanded (1 Thessalonians 4:3), there is a carnal mind even in the regenerate (Romans 7:14-25), and conflict continues to the end. The Holy Spirit ever answers the cry for deliverance, but the flesh resists the Spirit. Therefore the finished work of Christ enabling His righteousness to be imputed to us must go hand-in-hand with the continuous work of the Holy Spirit within our hearts.

Smeaton is on solid ground in his teaching concerning the Spirit's work in the individual. It is not new teaching, but is presented clearly and in a gracious manner. His discussion on Christian ethics is particularly helpful. The caution against perfectionism is sound, and even though many Christians cannot accept total depravity, and the concept of instantaneous change at conversion as an incontrovertibly inevitable method, most of the teaching on the work of the Spirit is accepted by those who recognise the Spirit's personality.

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton quotes a memorable sentence from the letters of Alexander Thomson: "To the ignorant and to the wicked the Catholic Church holds out inducements almost irresistible." Smeaton, Memoir of Alexander Thomson of Banchory, p. 99.

However, many phases of the Spirit's work in the individual are rarely mentioned or ignored. Only one brief mention is made of the Spirit's inner witness to the believer,<sup>1</sup> and only two allusions to the Spirit's work in giving assurance.<sup>2</sup> The fruit of the Spirit, and joy<sup>3</sup> as part of the fruit, receive only passing notice. He refers twice to the Holy Spirit as Comforter, but this important idea is never developed, nor is the Spirit's help in prayer more than hinted. The baptism of the Spirit is too cursorily treated, and the controversial subject of baptismal regeneration by the Spirit is nearly ignored. These are grave and surprising omissions, but may be the result of the comparative objectivity of the doctrinal unfolding. These considerable defects serve as a reminder of the tremendous scope of the work of the Spirit in the individual and a challenge to more thorough study.

Smeaton considers the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost the greatest event in history next to the incarnation and the atonement.<sup>4</sup> This was a real filling of the human faculties with the personal Holy Spirit, fitting these men for their work, and transforming their characters and natures, so that they became bold, unselfish, humble, and suddenly acquired tremendous knowledge and understanding of spiritual truth. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost welded the saved souls into a Church as a living unity. The Church with Christ as its Head, is His body, the temple of the Spirit, a city of refuge from Satan.

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, pp. 211-212.

<sup>2</sup> This lack is due to the individual's unimportance in this doctrinal scheme. Joseph Parker has a chapter on the Spirit's witness, Joseph Parker, The Paraclete, Op. cit., pp. 167-177. His is a popular approach.

<sup>3</sup> The writer feels that joy in the Christian life has received only passing notice in the Church life of Scotland, and surely it is a greatly needed note in all Christian proclamation especially in reaching youth and the unchurched. It is significant that Smeaton neglects both the resurrection and joy - yet he was unquestionably theologically aware of both, and his own personal "resurrection" life radiated calm, inner joy.

<sup>4</sup> Again the resurrection is omitted.

As the Holy Spirit baptized Christ to mark the beginning of His ministry, so Jesus baptized His disciples by the Spirit at Pentecost, and the Church began its ministry. Each waited until the Spirit came.

Smeaton holds that the Holy Spirit is to take the place of Jesus, to give aid, remind the apostles of Jesus' teaching and clarify it, support all preaching of the gospel, and show the apostles God's will, Jesus began to give the Holy Spirit on the evening of His resurrection (John 20:22). The Spirit was directing the apostles as they filled the vacant apostleship;<sup>1</sup> yet with one accord they prayed for more of the Spirit (Acts 1:14). Smeaton adds, refuting the doctrine of the Plymouth Brethren, that praying for more of the Spirit "is the true attitude of the Christian Church in every age."<sup>2</sup>

The Church has two functions: it is a holy society and a missionary institute. As a holy society, the Church meets for worship and mutual edification. The Church is vitally related to Christ as His Bride (Revelation 19:7, 2 Corinthians 11:2), as the temple in which Christ is the Cornerstone and each member a living stone (I Peter 2:5), and the members are branches of the Vine (John 15:1-6). The Church is one, holy, catholic, apostolic and invisible. Corporately, the Church is a "holy temple" (Ephesians 2:21-22), the invisible "city of God" (Hebrews 12:22-24) in which God lives. Smeaton emphasises that "it is the believer's relation to Christ that puts him in connection with the Church; not his connection with the Church that puts him into a saving relation to Christ."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A.J. Gordon says this choosing was a mistake of men. It does seem as if the Holy Spirit never did ratify it, The Ministry of the Spirit, pp. 135-6. Yet I tend to agree with Smeaton because of the accord about this.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 52. The phrase, "more of the Spirit" is questionable, seeming to imply that the Spirit is quantitative. Prayer for deeper consecration is probably intended.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 267.

Schleiermacher distinguishes Smeaton's emphasis as Protestant, its opposite as Catholic.<sup>1</sup>

In facing the problem of how to explain Christ's presence in the Church along with the agency of the Holy Spirit, Smeaton simply remarks that it is two sides of the same thing. "Christ ... acts for the Church's good by His Spirit through the Word."<sup>2</sup> Christ is present in the Church by the Spirit, (not by "the alleged ubiquity of Christ's humanity" as the Lutheran Church taught, nor by His own divine omnipresence) conducting God's word to man, and man's worship to God (Psalm 22:22, Hebrews 2:12).<sup>3</sup>

Smeaton categorically states that the mystic element is always connected with every true revival. Mysticism's central proposition is the fellowship of life with Christ by the Holy Spirit. Yet this emphasis on fellowship in the Spirit implied this once, is greatly neglected by Smeaton. Dr. Robinson says in his chapter on the Holy Spirit and the Church: "If we ask what is the most characteristic and comprehensive work of the Holy Spirit, according to the New Testament, there can be little doubt that we should answer in the one word, 'fellowship.'<sup>4</sup> Yet Smeaton is not alone in neglecting this matter; Robinson is one of the very few to emphasise this cardinal privilege, the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

Smeaton maintains that there is intrinsically only the one Church and one Spirit in both Old and New Testament. The trinitarian relations are the same, and the sacraments are identical in import and efficacy. This position is held in opposition to that of Rome which maintains that the Old Testament sacraments

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<sup>1</sup> Schleiermacher, Op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 270. Gore has a helpful comment: "Thus the Holy Spirit comes not so much to supply the absence of Christ as to accomplish His presence in the world as its Saviour and New Life." (Charles Gore, The Holy Spirit and the Church, p. 110.) Parker agrees with Smeaton, (Parker, Op. cit., p. 17).

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Loc. cit. See also H.B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the New Testament, pp. 221, 242.

<sup>4</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson, The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit, pp. 141-142.

are only types of those of the New Testament. All Protestant churches assented to Augustine's teaching for some time, but eventually the Lutherans and Anglicans came to Rome's view.<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Spirit still fills obedient disciples, and only then can they succeed in bringing men into living contact with God. The Holy Spirit works in the Church to ingather new disciples, propagate the gospel and revive religion. The Spirit prepares men and endows them with power for the ministry to do the work of the Church as a missionary institute. The preacher, as God's trumpet, must sound forth a clear, vivid message on "ruin, redemption, and regeneration;" then "the law is enforced on the impenitent, and the gospel commended to the contrite."<sup>2</sup> But the Holy Spirit alone can give efficacy to the Word spoken.<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit often uses the Word, planted in childhood, and also brings conviction of sin while the sinner is at his employment. There are always tares reaped with the good fruit at such a time, for "where the Spirit builds a Church, Satan builds a chapel,"<sup>4</sup> but the work of redemption moves forward rapidly.

In praising the Puritans, Smeaton declares that they were fully persuaded of a fact to which all history gives a harmonious testimony: "In the ratio in which the ritualistic element ascends, the spiritual element descends."<sup>5</sup> This is the key to Smeaton's thinking on the worship service. A most refreshing sermon by Smeaton establishes the ostensible need by worshippers of a renewed

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<sup>1</sup> Most churches today would agree with Rome as to the two sacraments, in that the Old Testament sacraments are only types. Smeaton seems to have little or no basis for this tenet.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Sermon: The Faithful Laborer's Reward in Heaven, p. 7. (Funeral of Dr. Ale Davidson).

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, Holy Spirit, p. 284.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

awareness of Christ's presence in a service.

"Have we a people who stand in conscious agreement with their pastor as to the presence that is expected to glorify and to ennoble ordinances - who see a glory in the song of praise, which the great King condescends to inhabit - a glory in the prayer where He comes forth to commune with us - a glory in the word where He walks in majesty both in the solemn grandeur of the law, and in the winning grace of the gospel - a glory in baptism, where He comes nigh to seal a covenant engagement - and a glory in the supper, where the redeemed are brought into His banqueting house. How can men expect to see the goings of the King in ordinances if they do not bring the presence of the King along with them."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton denotes two aberrations that seriously vitiate a healthy worship in the Church: (1) A "blighting ritualism" substitutes the Church's action for that of Christ and the Holy Spirit. It ignores the Spirit and "binds results to a mere array of forms."<sup>2</sup> Christ is an inactive spectator. Dispensing the sacrament is equated to communication of the Spirit. (2) A "false spiritualism" at the opposite extreme, evacuates the sacraments of the Spirit's presence, making them empty signs.<sup>3</sup> Smeaton insists, with Calvin, that the sacraments do not impart grace by their mere administration, neither are they barren signs, being channels of blessing to every believing recipient through the working of the Spirit.

Smeaton's final word is a practical exhortation: "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). This brings the greatest joy to the Christian, issuing in song and heartfelt gratitude. All who appreciate the Holy Spirit's work, and desire and pray for Him, shall be filled with the Spirit, and in addition they will receive more from day to day - and special measure for every trial.

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, The Real Presence of Christ in the Midst of His People. The Only Attraction and Glory of Ordinances: A Sermon. pp. 12-13, 27. Also see A.J. Gordon, Op. cit., pp. 138-148.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Op. cit., p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> W.H. Stowell, Op., cit., pp. 223-224. Stowell upholds the position that Smeaton decries, but Stowell is weak in this place, Smeaton's teaching being far more acceptable as more in accord with Church doctrine.



### Conclusion

In 1889, Smeaton wrote in the Preface to the second edition of his book on the Holy Spirit: "One of the most hopeful signs of the times is the growing interest in the doctrine and work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> In 1912, H. B. Swete in the foreword to his valuable work, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, anticipates the study on the Spirit in progress at this time: "It may be given to our own age or to the next to make its own contribution to the expression of this great article of our faith; a contribution which, while leaving the ancient landmarks undisturbed, will take account of the new and rapidly widening experience of these latter days."<sup>2</sup>

The development of the doctrine in this 20th century has been advanced by such men as C. A. Briggs,<sup>3</sup> Walter Eichrodt,<sup>4</sup> Aubrey R. Johnson,<sup>5</sup> Sigmund Mowinkel,<sup>6</sup> on the Old Testament, and others such as C. K. Barrett,<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, preface, p. x.

<sup>2</sup> H. B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, Op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> C. A. Briggs, "The Use of  $\pi$  17 in the Old Testament." The Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. XIX, 1900, Pt. II, pp. 132-145.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments, Teil, 2-3, pp. 18-31.

<sup>5</sup> Aubrey R. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel.

<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Mowinkel, The Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. LIII, No. 3, October, 1934, pp. 199-227: Art. The 'Spirit' and the 'Word' in the Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets."

<sup>7</sup> C. K. Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition.

E. F. Scott,<sup>1</sup> and R. Birch Hoyle<sup>2</sup> on the New Testament. Most of these men have opened up a research and discussion in the Biblical study of the Holy Scriptures that promises tremendous increase in theological perception in the years ahead. This enlargement of outlook and understanding largely due to the critical movement has served to call into question much of the work on the Spirit of the previous eighteen centuries.

Smeaton represents the orthodox Church doctrine of the first eighteen centuries, and is accordingly not expected to have much to say to-to-day's Holy Spirit theology. In addition there are weaknesses in Smeaton's presentation that limit its worth to-day: (1) The emphasis on the separate functions of the Trinity almost causes him to lose sight of the unity of the God-head. (2) His doctrine of absolute inability on the part of man, combined with his disparagement of the work of all who exhibited Pelagian, Arminian, or Synergistic tendencies was a consistent Calvinistic approach, but would make his work less valuable to any who deny this fundamental presupposition. Most of his arguments are merely assertions of Calvinist doctrine backed by tradition. However, he does what he set out to do, to give "a brief outline or sketch of the positive truth accepted by the

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1 E. F. Scott, The Spirit in the New Testament.

2 R. Birch Hoyle, The Holy Spirit in St. Paul.

Church."<sup>1</sup> (3) The work of the Spirit in prayer, and His influence in the personal devotional life are almost completely overlooked. (4) The aspects of fellowship, assurance, comfort, joy, fruit-bearing are neglected. (5) In the light of present study, Smeaton's treatment of the Old Testament doctrine of the Spirit is inadequate. There is very little reference to the connections between the Old and New Testament except in regard to Isaiah's Messianic allusions and inspiration of the prophets and apostles. (6) Baptism of the Spirit,<sup>2</sup> and the controversy over the "second work of grace" are almost ignored, perhaps because these emphases are recent developments. There is no discussion whatsoever of Baptismal regeneration. (7) There is so much emphasis on what the Spirit does, and man's complete passivity, that one feels the doctrine is abstract and impractical, for man can do nothing. The only thing he is told to do is to co-operate and yet he is unable to. This is a one-sided picture, probably inevitable with such convictions. Smeaton has a perplexing problem in keeping out the human agency in conversion, and he admits man's help in sanctification.

Perhaps one of the principal defects is the obvious

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1 Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, preface, p. ix.

2 Entire books have been written on this subject, such as G. W. H. Lampe's, The Seal of the Spirit.

objectivity of the teaching, causing him to neglect to discuss the Spirit's deep probing and digging in the life of the Christian, making him want to change, but also often creating rebellion. Many Christians thus seek to avoid the personal Spirit, and the conflict is not resolved until the heart becomes humble and open. It is very likely that Smeaton was so humble and open himself that he may not have been so conscious of this common spiritual struggle. To him the doctrine is simple and straightforward, the refinements being of an intangible nature, impossible to describe or define, like the wind, or a glorious symphony of music, felt and experienced throughout one's being to the point of ecstasy, inexpressible in beauty and glory, but of vital daily effect in the personal life. Smeaton indicates neither the struggle nor the glory.

But as one looks at the modern study one finds great confusion of thought and idea. R. Birch Hoyle, in The Holy Spirit in St. Paul, distinguishes seven characterisations of the Spirit: (1) semi-material substance, (2) power or energy, (3) abstract principle, (4) an instinct, influence, or inspiration, (5) Hegel's 'spirit of logic' in the dialectic process, (6) person, (7) collective spirit (Schleiermacher).<sup>1</sup> Many agree

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<sup>1</sup> R. Birch Hoyle, The Holy Spirit in St. Paul, pp. 16-20.

to His personality, but will not accept Him as a person, a worthless distinction.<sup>1</sup> More of His work in the Old Testament has been revealed to us than ever before. Great horizons of possibility stretch out before us, for "while the reality of the spirit is always the same, the spirit operationally is not undifferentiated being, no static self-same structure, but is operationally diversified, the flexible fullness of which is the reality and total precondition of creation and creativity."<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton and his age have something to say to us. There should be a return to the "ancient landmarks" for direction. Smeaton's approach to the doctrine of the Spirit is a re-statement of the traditional Calvinistic teaching, characterized by a contemporary as "an eminently sound and learned work", "surpassing in value all that has proceeded from the same author."<sup>3</sup> Smeaton's main purpose was to assert and prove the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit over against the constantly recurring tendency to consider Him an influence, and also to contend for the Holy Spirit as the sole agent along with the Word in regenerative application of the atonement to human hearts, against the strong Arminian emphasis

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<sup>1</sup> Rees says in the conclusion of his book, written to prove his own contention: "Christian experience in itself, in so far as it has been analysed, affords no evidence of a definite activity of the Spirit, as a distinct person or operation of God." Rees, The Holy Spirit, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Nels Ferre, The Christian Understanding of God, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Presbyterian Review, Vol. IV. Op. cit., p. 453. The author considers the Atonement volumes more valuable.

on man's free will as the main determinant in conversion. He has much to say about the Spirit's sanctifying work in the individual and the Church; and the historical section, brief, but lucid and complete, manifests a keen understanding of theological trends, and features a clear refutation of Amyraldianism and the Schleiermacher school, even though all of Smeaton's historical judgments would not be accepted. In an age of futile humanism, obsessed with a horror of the present and future ravages of sin, we need to come to God, the Holy Spirit, conscious of our helplessness and hopelessness, praying that the gentle Comforter will have complete freedom to cleanse, fill, and use us once again. We do need to "be filled with the Spirit." "The Holy Spirit cannot be contained within any merely human descriptive categories. He is of God, Holy, and therefore beyond our highest knowledge: yet as He joins Himself even to us, we may show forth His Glory by the very words which we use to bear witness to His operations in the hearts and lives of men."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton believed this and taught it, but the writer cannot help but think that if he had confined his contribution on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the same type of exegesis he accomplished on the atonement, his work would have made a greater mark in his own time, and would be more valuable to-day.

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<sup>1</sup> F. W. Dillistone, The Holy Spirit in the Life of To-day, p. 21.



## CHAPTER VI

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### DOCTRINE OF CHURCH AND STATE

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Smeaton lived at that period in Scottish Church history which included both the greatest secession of all and the culminating battle over the approximately identical themes of the "spiritual independence of the Church" or the supreme "Headship of Christ" in addition to the debate over the desirability of "National Christianity"; therefore his position as one who consistently maintained the Establishment principle against both Erastianism and Voluntarism should be carefully considered. A major part of Scottish Church history is a history of disagreement and decision on these two doctrines, and since they have been pivotal in shaping the destiny of the nation as well as the Church, and since they explain not only the significant factors in Smeaton's reasoning, but also the intense heat and bitterness of the controversy, a brief review of the salient decisions is imperative.

#### Historical Background

A Church history professor in the United States of America once said in the hearing of the writer, "Presbyterians

are like hickory, tough, but always splitting," and the writer's recent study of Scottish Church history has re-emphasised the validity of that statement. Dr. Rainy confirms that:

"... it is perfectly true that Scottish religious bodies were, for a time, in the way of dividing on small points; it is quite true, and really if I had any means of throwing doubt upon it, I could not have the heart to do it. Who would deny or abridge the peculiarities of that phase of Scottish character and incident."<sup>1</sup>

The basis for many of these divisions is incorporated in a quotation from Donne: "Sentences in Scripture, like hairs in horses' tails, concur in one root of beauty and strength, but, being plucked out one by one, serve only for springes and snares."<sup>2</sup>

Three views of the Church-State relationship are held in varying degrees and are the determinants of the policy pursued. The Erastian view, generally held by Episcopacy, Anglicanism, and Lutheranism, is that of government or State control of the Church.<sup>3</sup> The middle position, usually the course of the Reformed Church of Scotland, is of Establishment, which involves partnership of Church and State, each master in its respective sphere

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Rainy, Three Lectures on the Church of Scotland, pp. 43-44.

<sup>2</sup> John Buchan and George Adam Smith, The Kirk in Scotland, 1560-1929, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> The name Erastian comes from Thomas Erastus of Switzerland who wrote against the right or power of the Church to excommunicate, saying that power to punish belonged only to the civil magistrate. Though he never personally believed in State control, Erastianism became the doctrine of State supremacy in ecclesiastical causes.

along the Calvinistic line promulgated in the Westminster Confession. Voluntaryism with its complete repudiation of State connection with the Church, and its emphasis upon support of the Church by the members' gifts, is usually held by the non-conformist groups. This concept of a free Church in a free State dates from the time of the French Revolution.

The Reformation in 1560 signalized a formal return to simplicity of ritual which is still a central characteristic of the Scottish Church, and the beginning of the Reformed Church on a Calvinistic model with spiritual autonomy, "since it owned no Headship but Christ's."<sup>1</sup> Many individual churches were organised on this basis. In 1567 an Act of Parliament recognised the Reformed Church as the Church of the land. In 1584 James VI and I gave the principle of Episcopacy his confirmation and put himself in power.<sup>2</sup> However, in 1592 James' mood changed, and calling the Scottish Church "the sincerest Kirk in the world,"<sup>3</sup> he gave formal sanction to the Reformed Church in the first of three Acts which Smeaton calls "the Magna Charta of the Scottish Church."<sup>4</sup> (However, patronage remained).

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<sup>1</sup> Buchan and Smith. Op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> W. Stephen, History of the Scottish Church, Vol. II, pp. 132-135.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Brown, Church and State in Scotland, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory of Ecclesiastical Establishments, p. 24.

But since by 1600 James was again moving to control the Church with himself as its self-appointed head, to bring it in line with the Church of England, the result was that after he became the English monarch, this trend was accelerated. All Scotland finally rose in rebellion against Charles I and signed the Covenant in the Greyfriars' churchyard on March 1, 1638; and the November assembly in Glasgow under the inspiring leadership of Moderator Alexander Henderson, made the "second reformation" an historical fact.<sup>1</sup>

When the monarchy was restored under Charles II in 1660, the tragedy of the "Killing Times" began. Patronage had been abolished in 1649.

"... and the Assembly, following it up, had vested the right of electing the minister in the Kirk-session, with power to the congregation to complain to the presbytery in case they were dissatisfied. All the ministers ordained from 1649 to 1660 had been chosen under this system. It was now declared that all such ministers had no right to their livings."<sup>2</sup>

This was on May 8, 1662, and until the Revolution Settlement of June 7 1690, approved by William and Mary, ratifying the Confession of Faith and settling Presbyterian Church government, a reign of terror ensued that

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<sup>1</sup> N. L. Walker, Scottish Church History, pp. 49-51.

<sup>2</sup> John Cunningham, The Church History of Scotland, Vol. II, p. 92.

claimed the lives of hundreds of Scots.<sup>1</sup> This settlement resulted in a final victory over Episcopacy but not over Erastianism. Patronage, however, was once again abolished. But patronage was restored by the Act of Anne in 1712, carrying "dismay into the Presbyterian ranks,"<sup>2</sup> and precipitating the Presbyterian tendency, a "liability to hive off into sects."<sup>3</sup> Gradually increasing enforcement of patronage almost eliminated the right of the congregation to have a voice in calling a minister.<sup>4</sup>

Smeaton was a young clergyman of 29 years of age when the "Great Disruption" of 1843 occurred. The evangelical majority in the Church found itself in opposition to patronage and passed the veto Act of 1834 which provided that

"an arrest should be made on a presbytery's procedure only when a majority of the male heads of families, being communicants, came forward and formally objected to an induction."<sup>5</sup>

But when in October, 1834, Robert Young was presented to Auchterarder, his call was signed by three people and opposed by 287 heads of families.<sup>6</sup> When Presbytery stopped proceedings, he appealed to the civil courts

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory, etc., pp. 26-28. Also Brown. Op. cit., pp. 113-117.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham. Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> Buchan and Smith. Op. cit., pp. 53-57.

<sup>4</sup> Walker. Op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> Walker. Op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter I, p. 6.

which declared the Veto Act invalid and ordered the Auchterarder Presbytery to induct him. Matters deteriorated until the "Claim of Right" adopted by the 1842 Assembly was ignored by the Cabinet, and a move for inquiry, in March, 1843, was refused.<sup>1</sup> This made disruption inevitable, and the scene of May 18, 1843 has often been feelingly and eloquently described. Dr. Welsh read the Protest before what was to have been the constituting of the Assembly, and

"After reading this Protest, Dr. Welsh bowed to the Commissioner and retired. Then formed the famous procession which marched from St. Andrew's Church to Canonmills Hall. With Chalmers and Welsh at their head, they marched on amid the silent astonishment of the crowd and of the spectators that filled the windows, with no sign of faltering in their step and no look of dejection in their faces. Onward they marched, vanquished yet victorious, casting no longing, lingering looks behind, severed further at each step from the smile of royalty and the favour of the great, and, what was far more serious, from comfortable homes and venerable churches beautiful with the holiest associations of their lives. Like the famous St. Francis, they seemed to be wedding poverty and plunging into misery. One thought, and one only, sustained them: they had the approval of their consciences and the smile of their Master."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Chalmers was unanimously elected Moderator<sup>3</sup> and said in his moderator's speech: "'Though we quit the Establishment we go out on Establishment principle. We quit a

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<sup>1</sup> W. Stephen, History of the Scottish Church. Op. cit., pp. 620-622.

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Blaikie, After Fifty Years, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Brown, Annals of the Disruption, p. 95.



vitiating Establishment, but would rejoice in returning to a pure one. To express it otherwise, we are the advocates for a national recognition and a national support of religion, and we are not Voluntaries."<sup>1</sup>

From 1732, secessions and splits had been frequent and bitter, the original group under Erskine dividing into Burghers and Anti-burghers in 1749, and each of these groups later splitting into Old Lights (favouring Establishment but not patronage) and New Lights (unqualified Voluntaries). In 1847 the first notable union took place when five hundred congregations of various separatist organizations combined to become the United Presbyterian Church definitely modelled on Voluntary principles. In 1852 the majority of the Original Seceders (the Old Light Anti-Burghers) united with the Free Church.<sup>2</sup> On this occasion Dr. Candlish said in his testimony:

"... Tonight we stand out as uniting upon the ground of opposition to Erastianism on the one hand and to Voluntarism on the other. This is, in substance, in short compass, the ground and foundation of our present union."<sup>3</sup>

In 1863, the great Union controversy began which "shook the Free Church to its foundations."<sup>4</sup> This controversy

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<sup>1</sup> A. Stewart and J. K. Cameron, The Free Church of Scotland 1843-1910, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Norman L. Walker, Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland, pp. 228-232.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart and Cameron. Op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

came from the desire of many to unite the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church, but the opposition of those who doggedly held to the principle of Establishment in the Free Church caused the movement toward union to be dropped in 1873.

Meanwhile, the Established Church, although by now the damage had been done, was gradually preparing to cast off the onerous yoke of patronage. In 1869 the Church officially condemned patronage, and by 1874 a Conservative government abolished Patronage by repealing Queen Anne's Act of 1712.<sup>1</sup> Though many in the Free Church were hostile to this long overdue liberation of the Established Church, Smeaton's attitude was probably typical of most of the men who had opposed union with the United Presbyterian Church.

"Can we affirm, in the light of recent legislation, that the Scottish theory which we have been describing is in any considerable measure realised? Yes: the unexpected has happened. Any lingering hope I cherished as to the resuscitation of the old and venerated constitution of the Scottish Church had well-nigh faded away from my mind. Such was the intensity of my affection for the old historic Church of Scotland that I often said with M'Crie: 'I would go seven times to the top of her highest mountain to look out for the harbinger of her relief.' It has come, and I am filled with joy and gratitude to Him Who is Lord of all. I hope the Church will have combined faithfulness and wisdom to use it aright. Nor has the harrassing conflict which we maintained upwards of thirty years ago with the civil courts, and which issued in our separation or ejection from

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<sup>1</sup> W. Chambers, The Scottish Church, pp. 335, 337-338.

the pale of the Establishment been in vain. It has been over-ruled in the inscrutably mysterious Providence of God, to win for the Church the legislative recognition of her liberties. It has tended in a variety of ways to which I shall not more specially refer, to show the necessity and safety of passing the Act which has reversed the captivity of the Scottish Church, and is destined, whether men like it or not, to have a most important influence on Scotchmen and Scotland for ages to come."<sup>1</sup>

In 1876 a large part of the Reformed Presbyterian Church united with the Free Church. In 1878 the Established Church approached the Free Church on the matter of union, but the drift was already too definitely toward the United Presbyterian standard of Voluntaryism. As Dr. Robert Buchanan had said in 1872: "'I dare say death will have a good deal to do among us before the set time for Union comes . . .'"<sup>2</sup>

#### Smeaton's Views on Union

Smeaton was an ardent champion of the middle course,<sup>3</sup> and effectively aided in its defence against all assaults. He did not, however, oppose the proposed union without carefully considered reasons. During initial discussions in 1861, Smeaton, in a conference with Principal Cunningham of New College who was vigorously opposed to union, advanced

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory of Ecclesiastical Establishments and how far the Theory is Realised, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart and Cameron. Op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 3, p. 205.

the opinion that union was possible without a surrender of principle.<sup>1</sup> However, Smeaton later changed his mind, and some of his most earnest polemic is used to deprecate what he considered a premature, unwise and meaningless union.<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton left the Establishment at the time of the Disruption, but he never deserted the principle of the Established Church; one of the foremost reasons for his opposition to the proposed union was its lack of breadth, for he felt that union, when it came, should be of all Scottish Presbyterianism, and should consist of a reconciliation of all dissident groups with the Church of Scotland. His opinion, in this particular, was statesman-like in character:

"But for union in one organization the Churches plainly are not ripe. . . It may be that another generation, impatient of the ecclesiastical broils and petty jealousies now in the ascendant, may take the matter into its own hand, and effect a union on the old foundation of the historic Church of Scotland. To that all my inclinations tend; and admiring as I have ever done from youth that admirable constitution, I have no objection to it in principle, if it were fully understood that the Standards of the Church of Scotland are to be carried out in their spirit and provisions."<sup>3</sup>

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1 C. G. M'Crie, The Church of Scotland - Her Divisions and Her Re-unions, p. 220. An echo of these conversations is intimated at the beginning of Smeaton's speech to the Edinburgh Free Presbytery in 1870 where Smeaton related that Dr. Cunningham saw how painful and disappointing negotiations would be. Smeaton, Union Inadmissible on the Basis Proposed, pp. 48-49.

2 Smeaton, National Christianity and Scriptural Union, pp. 122-123.

3 Smeaton, The Scottish Theory, etc., pp. 16-17. A proposal made by an Established Church minister in 1868, agreeing with Smeaton on his major premise is worth perusing. (James Rankin, Union and Reunion Among Scottish Presbyterians).

In the conclusion of a speech at Glasgow, a portion of which is quoted above, Smeaton congratulates the Established Church of Scotland on her new found freedom,<sup>1</sup> urges her to confess to "legal preaching" and moderatism, and encourages her to forget "heterogeneous unions" and to seek a revival of true worship, doctrine, zeal and activity of the early days, reminding her that "she has no occasion to be ashamed of her past, or to apologise for her Scottish individuality. . . if true to her divine Head."<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly Smeaton was convinced that the pressures toward union of the Free Church and United Presbyterians were not actuated by the best motives, even though the consideration most often presented sounded disarmingly reasonable: namely, that churches, having the same doctrine, discipline, worship and government in the same country, should unite.<sup>3</sup> First of all, he felt that the doctrine was not the same. Secondly, he was convinced, "Politics have much to do with it - I fear much more than religion. It [union plan] has moved forward in an atmosphere of strong political partisanship, and seems destined to be a tool, and a willing tool, for the purposes of mere party politicians."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Supra p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory, etc. Op. cit., pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 6

<sup>4</sup> Stewart and Cameron, Free Church of Scotland, 1843-1910, Op. cit., pp. 18-19.

Thirdly, Smeaton believed that the men who desired union did not heed Scripture evidence; that, to them, union was merely a "doctrinaire theory," a determined purpose, or a matter indifferent.<sup>1</sup> Fourthly, he was sure that the aim of many was to crush Establishment and such an utterly negative motive precluded God's blessing. The "cry for Disestablishment", opposed by Hugh Miller in 1847, was obnoxious to Smeaton, who was persuaded "that it would have the effect, if acted upon, of placing the great Protestant front of the empire in a fatally false position, and . . . be peculiarly injurious to the Free Church."<sup>2</sup> The final factor that manifested to Smeaton the falsity of the union position, was that a purely outward union was being sought. "This is not union in the truth, but union against the truth."<sup>3</sup> External union leads to the danger of hierarchy.<sup>4</sup> No outer union is possible if: (1) "either party recedes one hair's breadth from the acknowledged truth of God"; (2) external union is stressed at the expense of Scripture; (3) love and concord are magnified at the expense of truth; and if (4) full expression is not secured for every conscientious conviction.<sup>5</sup>

Confederation was a conceivable possibility to

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1 Smeaton, National Christianity, etc., Op. cit., p.122.

2 Smeaton, The Scottish Theory etc. Op. cit., pp. 17-18.

3 Smeaton, Union Inadmissible. Op. cit., p. 56.

4 Smeaton, National Christianity, etc., p. 13.

5 Ibid., p. 112.



Smeaton,<sup>1</sup> but he maintained it impossible to unite when the two church bodies disagreed on major issues. At first he had desired union on an "honest middle ground," but now he was convinced union was impossible unless one Church submitted completely to the other, and for the Free Church, it was impossible to give up their basic principles, spiritual independence of the Church and the nation's duty to Christ. The unionists suggested that they "leave diverging views on minor points as open questions."<sup>2</sup> Smeaton declared that this was union on the basis of negation or non-confessing, and "negation is but the transition to positive error."<sup>3</sup> If the Free Church gave up its distinctive feature of National Christianity, which teaches that it is the magistrate's duty as head of the State to support the Church, then it would be complete capitulation, and the Free Church would be a sect. In other words, Smeaton asserted that the so-called "minor points" were major to the Free Church and could not be given up or left open. The advocates of union were guilty of two obvious errors - the duty and advantages of union were greatly exaggerated (and Smeaton wished to go on record as giving unqualified opposition

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 11, 116.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Union Inadmissible. Op. cit., p. 52.

to the "overdone, exaggerated idea of the importance of outward Church union"),<sup>1</sup> and the distinctive principle of the magistrate's duty was not conserved or properly evaluated.<sup>2</sup> The adherents of National Christianity were urged to allow the United Presbyterians to hold any view they wished about the duty of the civil magistrate, but Smeaton said this was tantamount to accepting "undiluted Voluntaryism" and becoming members of the United Presbyterian Church.<sup>3</sup> The heat of Smeaton's argument reveals its origin in the next sentence: "This is, without colour or exaggeration, the proposal made to me, a Disruption minister."<sup>4</sup> In answering two arguments proposed by the men favouring union, namely that Protestantism would have more prestige in the face of Popery, and harmony of sentiment was impossible without union, Smeaton branded both as entirely false, claiming that union would bind and fetter truth and play into Roman Catholic hands, and that true harmony of sentiment can never be fostered by artificial means.<sup>5</sup> Also, the two modes of union proposed were not faithful to the truth, for it was suggested that certain articles either be cancelled or denied to be essential. Smeaton asserts that either alternative would relegate doctrine to the

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1 Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 115.

2 Ibid., p. 14.

3 Smeaton, Union Inadmissible. Op. cit., p. 50.

4 Ibid., p. 51.

5 Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 116.

statement of mere opinion and lower the Church and Christian standard. To him, as to many in the Free Church, these articles were a sacred "trust."<sup>1</sup>

The following objections to the United Presbyterian Church were practically insuperable to Smeaton: (1) Individualism as the evident primary principle of the United Presbyterian Church.<sup>2</sup> (2) The support of the Church and schools by voluntary offerings only. (3) Non-Calvinistic opinions on the atonement. This probably involved declension from the doctrine of limited atonement. (4) The severing of education from religion, ultimately leading to a comparatively godless generation of young as the gradual result of the breakdown of Christian training. (5) Relaxed subscription to the Westminster Confession, requiring no promises from those entering its ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Smeaton insisted that churches do not make themselves one as the result of human contrivance, but that they are already one in the Lord. Ephesians, 4:4-6 is a picture of the Church's true oneness - one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God.<sup>4</sup> Answering those who claimed John, 17:21 as proof for the need of external unity, Smeaton averred that Christ obtained that

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory, etc. Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Union Admissible. Op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, New Scheme of Incorporation, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 111.

for which He prayed, the unity of the apostles in spirit, love, disposition, interest, and aim, even as He and the Father were one.<sup>1</sup> "The Church has her own peculiar unity in her Lord", and it is a spiritual everlasting unity.<sup>2</sup> Smeaton held to the unity of the Spirit which enabled him to have fellowship with men of all denominations including the United Presbyterians and the Established Church without violating personal principle.<sup>3</sup> This kind of union is available at any time, and is the only type, coming in a normal, natural, God-directed way, that has any hope of ultimate success.

The Free Church position was unrealistic because it sought to maintain the Establishment principle, but had to practice Voluntaryism which it theoretically opposed. Accordingly the Free Church, which at the time of the Disruption had found itself in a very strong position spiritually, now found itself, as the result of failure to repeal the laws of patronage and of any overtures of peace from the Established Church, in a position where the sympathies of the great majority were for union with the United Presbyterians. So in 1863 when the matter was broached, there was little opposition, and in 1865

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1 Ibid., pp. 113-114.

2 Ibid., p. 13.

3 Smeaton, Union Inadmissible. Op. cit., p. 58.

only seven were recorded as opposed to such a consummation.<sup>1</sup> But subsequently the opposition gained momentum and determination under the leadership of Dr. James Begg who "in George Smeaton . . . enlisted an amiable theologian with a keen scent for heresy."<sup>2</sup> The conflict became complex and increasingly bitter, and the issues were magnified by intensive and often vitriolic writing and speaking on both sides, until the majority capitulated in 1873, to avert a new disruption.

As we look back upon this discordant scene, Smeaton's arguments move into clear focus. His desire for the union of all Scottish Presbyterianism was admirable, and his vision of future concord, prophetic. His objection to the political character of pressure toward union with United Presbyterians as an attempt to anticipate and thwart the possible approach of some in the Free Church toward union with a liberated Establishment, showed acute awareness, for such a possibility was offered in 1878. Also the desire to "crush" the Establishment, unfortunately, was uppermost in the minds of a considerable number.<sup>3</sup> Smeaton's antipathy to a merely outward union

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Fleming, The Church in Scotland, 1843-1874, p.177.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Rankin, Union and Reunion, etc. Op. cit., p. 10.

"What is called the Voluntary principle had its origin by slow degrees in expediency and a drifting process (first, separation from the church; next, antagonism to it)". It is very interesting to note in confirmation, the complete change of position of Dr. Buchanan from 1835 to 1870, when he became one of the leaders, along with Candlish of the move toward union. (Robert Buchanan, Lecture on Church Establishments, 1870).

was legitimate, and his four requirements for a valid union seem acceptable. But upon closer examination they break down.

It was undoubtedly "Disruption pride"<sup>1</sup> that caused the dissentients to insist on their position. Considering the fact that Establishment, for the Free Church, was by necessity a theoretic principle, and that the Voluntary principle did not actually violate "spiritual independence" or "Christ's Headship", most would now consider that, leaving these matters as open issues was the genuinely Christian thing to do, especially in the light of subsequent history. But it is a pity that minor doctrinal points were allowed to become major. Smeaton said that no union is possible if "either party recedes one hair's breadth from the acknowledged truth of God," or if external union is stressed at the expense of Scripture, or love and concord are magnified at the expense of truth. But the Establishment principle was not acknowledged as vital truth by the majority, and the Scripture substantiation is not very strong.<sup>2</sup> The "open issue" method secured full expression for every conscientious conviction. All vitally important doctrine was the same

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<sup>1</sup> This term was applied to the persistence of those who came out in the Disruption in maintaining the inviolability and correctness of their principles thirty years later, in spite of radically changed circumstances. Their "Disruption pride," epitomized by Smeaton's words, precluded recession from their set position.

<sup>2</sup> See *infra*: section three, this chapter.



in the two Church bodies. Union was to be on the basis of comprehensive agreement that minimized minor differences, and negation is not always transition to positive error. In such a union, churches desiring no State help would be welcome to support themselves. Smeaton's suggestion of confederation, rather than incorporating union would have been a happy solution if accepted early in the proceedings, and his conception of the true union of believers is absolutely incontrovertible.

When Smeaton's objections to the United Presbyterian Church are contemplated, they reveal much personal bias. The entire Christian relationship to Christ is primarily individual, and even the State Church founders when this rock is overlooked. Non-Calvinistic views on the atonement were even held by some in the Free Church, so should not be an insuperable barrier to union or fellowship. Education and religion have not been severed, though Voluntaryism, in part, is an accepted feature of the Church of Scotland to-day. The relaxation by the United Presbyterian Church of subscription to the Confession is comprehended in three words: the United Presbyterian ministers need not approve or believe anything "compulsory, persecuting, intolerant" in the Confession. This does allow considerable latitude, but Smeaton avows that "the idea of making room . . .

for these terms . . . is simply preposterous."<sup>1</sup>

Allowing for "Disruption pride" and many other factors, the judgment of history is probably summarized in a letter written by Dr. Buchanan in 1873: "When the time comes for resuming Union negotiations . . . men will be able to understand how utterly indefensible was the conduct of those by whose intemperate and groundless opposition the present delay has been brought about."<sup>2</sup> But in spite of the verdict, some attitudes of Smeaton are worth thinking about again. Was not this union premature and unwise because of its questionable motivation? All praise is due the Christian gentlemen who gave in to the stubborn minority. Is incorporating union productive of the great spiritual benefits claimed for it? Has such a union ever been productive of obvious spiritual revival or development? Are its benefits not exaggerated? Is not confederation a noteworthy and Christian method of procedure?<sup>3</sup>

#### Smeaton's Doctrine of Church and State

This leads us to a consideration of Smeaton's

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 103. The writer was by necessity a close student of a similar ecclesiastical "war of words" that took place in the United States in the last twenty-five years, and nothing can ever be proved as to where such words would lead. It is certainly a personal matter. Smeaton's objection to their insertion here was apparently based on his conviction that the Westminster Confession was practically inviolate.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Walker, Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland, pp. 250-1.

<sup>3</sup> Such as the World Council to-day. Of course the World Council includes Churches of different creeds and governments.

doctrine of Church and State. The Bible was the source of all Smeaton's doctrines, and the central tenet of his thinking about Church and State is the complete equality of the Old Testament and New Testament Churches, and their oneness in the sight of God. One of his main criticisms of the Voluntary theory was that it lowers the status of the Old Testament economy, claiming that the Jewish and Christian churches were opposed in character, to the detriment of the Jewish.<sup>1</sup> Smeaton taught that,

"the saints who lived under the time of the first promise. . . were saved by the retrospective efficacy of His atoning death. . . The pardon . . which extended to unnumbered multitudes during the ages preceding the birth of Christ, was due to the blood of atonement about to be shed in the fulness of time."<sup>2</sup>

"What difference there was between the saints of God in the Old and New Testament, was not in the objective remission [of sins] but in the inward consciousness of pardon and liberty."<sup>3</sup> "It is one Church of God under a different guise in the Old Testament and in the New. The same Spirit of faith filled the heart of believers, whether they lived before or after the advent of Christ (II Corinthians, 2:13)."<sup>4</sup> Against the Roman contention that the sacraments of the Israelitish dispensation were shadows of the ones in use by the Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, The Atonement as Taught by Christ, Vol. I, pp. 326-7.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, The Atonement as Taught by the Apostles, Vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, pp.

Church, the "Reformers maintained without exception, that in both economies the sacraments were identical in import and efficacy."<sup>1</sup>

With the unity and equality of the Churches in the Old and New Testaments as an assumed foundation, Smeaton builds a Scripture basis for Establishment. In a preface to a lengthy dissertation by Thomas M'Crie, Smeaton asseverates that the only possible refutation of his arguments for Establishment in 1807 is from those who minimize the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> M'Crie holds that the Jewish theocracy was the Christian State of the Old Testament, a community capable of being in covenant with God.<sup>3</sup> Smeaton declares that in the Old Testament Israel recognises Jehovah as national ruler, and that the New Testament says nothing against a national creed, and thus accepts the Old Testament principle.<sup>4</sup> Smeaton specifies three types of evidence from the Bible: historic, from the Old Testament Jewish kingdoms, perceptive, from such passages as Psalms, 2:10-11, and prophetic, as signified by Revelation, 11:15.<sup>5</sup>

Smeaton bestows more time and care on a development

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> M'Crie. Statement of Difference, p. xi. Preface by George Smeaton.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 42. A weak argument.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-123. Psalm, 2:10-11. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Revelation, 11:15. "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (These verses apply, but such a foundation is exceedingly dubious for the superstructure that has been built).

of the historical material. The New Testament silence is due to the circumstance that no Christian nation existed, and the fact that no civil ruler helped the Church for the first three centuries was because God "made it more evident that no human contrivance had devised the Christian religion, and that no human power could put it down."<sup>1</sup> The rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel acting through its rulers, resulted in doom falling on the nation.<sup>2</sup> Smeaton used Old Testament examples: when Egypt protected the chosen people, she was blessed; when she persecuted Israel, God's curse fell upon her; and the same results pervaded Israel's relation with all other nations. God dealt with Israel as a nation through her leaders. When the Jewish kings co-operated with her religious leaders and used their authority and influence to help the Old Testament Church and bring the people back to God, they were commended and blessed by God. Even though the Jewish economy was a Theocracy, God's control and direction did not lessen the magistrate's duty and responsibility then or now. Jewish kings are not types, but examples for Christian rulers of all ages. Smeaton alludes to the second Psalm as the "classical passage" on the subject of Christ's

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.

dominion, especially emphasising that if the activity of the kings against Christ is official, the summons to adoration and service is addressed to them in their official capacity. Psalm, 72:10 is mentioned as an example of national contributions to the Christian cause.<sup>1</sup>

The Scripture groundwork for Smeaton's position seems very flimsy. The assumed equality of the Old Testament and New Testament Churches was violently contested in his day, and would be even more disputed to-day when the authenticity of the Old Testament is considered less trustworthy than the New. Even if Smeaton's theory of inspiration were accepted, it would give small justification for his assumption as to the equal standing of the Church and sacraments in the Old and New Testaments, and the fact that nearly all denominations have agreed with Rome, that the Old Testament sacraments are types, is significant. Most of the instances quoted, pictured national rejection of Christ, and the argument from opposites is weak when standing alone. When a nation turns to God, it is blessed; when it turns away, it moves toward ruin; but this truism has little to do with the principle of Establishment (Proverbs, 14:34). Psalm, 72:10 refers very clearly to Solomon, although

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81. "The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts."



the entire Psalm has been applied to the coming Messiah by Jewish exegetes; but it is, in any case, poor evidence. All of the references to Jewish kings and Theocratic rule can be applied just as acceptably to the Voluntary attitude that the ruler be sympathetic to the Church and a personal disciple of Christ, without committing a nation with varied faiths to a course that requires him to rule officially as a "lieutenant of God,"<sup>1</sup> under the authority of Revelation, and make the nation's laws under the same authority. The Theocratic rule of the Old Testament is unique in history, and the responsibility of magistrates to the nation of Israel and to the God of Israel finds no real counterpart since that time.

Smeaton maintains that if an individual, a family, a church can confess Christ, a State as ordained by God should be able to do so. A Church like the Baptist, founded on sectarian lines, is consistent in holding to the Voluntary theory, but when Presbyterians, who are well-taught, accept the corporate life of the family and the Church, but deny it in the State, Smeaton denounces them as inconsistent. "That mode of viewing a nation may suffice for untaught sects, but it is unfit to see the

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton. The Scottish Theory, etc. Op. cit., p. 4.

light of day."<sup>1</sup> It is unquestionably true that the ideal situation from a Christian viewpoint is a Christ-confessing nation with a Christ-confessing ruler, but history has proved that vital Christianity cannot be legislated into being, nor does the Christian faith seek such legislation, and Smeaton has not built a convincing case. He says he cannot unite with Voluntaries, since their ground is a non-Biblical denial of Christ's dominion over nations; such a union would be "a great apostacy and a heinous sin."<sup>2</sup> But the writer cannot find in Smeaton's elaborate argument a strong Biblical precedent.<sup>3</sup>

Smeaton's conviction that,

"an Established Church with its fixed standards, and its historic testimony to divine truth, such as we find in the Reformed Confessions, is more frequently favoured with a revival of religion than Dissenting bodies, capable of alteration according to the whim of a majority, and moving forward, like an Irish bog, they know not whither,"<sup>4</sup>

was strengthened by his knowledge of Scottish history, so he took time to explain the primary postulates of the "distinctively Scottish theory. . . [not like] the most ill-assorted alliances . . . such as those of the English and Continental Churches . . . nor is the Church

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 84. Many would disagree with Smeaton on both assumptions implied, that Presbyterians are well-taught, and Baptists are not.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> M'Crie admits its weakness in his endeavour to circumnavigate the difficulty. (See Dr. M'Crie's Statement of Difference, pp. 124-127.)

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 7.

a mere appendage of the State."<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Church has always retained independence in spiritual affairs, because they saw the errors of other State churches in giving the civil ruler too much power; therefore the Headship of Christ was asserted most strongly at the Disruption in order to prevent the Church becoming subject to the State.<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton names five fundamentals of any Church Establishment: (1) The State is corporately a moral person with moral responsibility. Since God's Word treats the State as a corporate moral entity, it can accept Christianity and profess it. The ruler's first duty as a Christian is to receive Bible revelation in a national way, and purge the previous false religions. The Christian faith elevates and purifies the nation and the family, and they become vessels to diffuse it. (2) The Nation must recognise the authority of the Bible and adopt a Creed prepared by the Church, thus confessing Christianity like an individual. It must learn to discern between Bible truth and its perversion. (3) The Christian State acts to secure Christian education of the young, Christian marriage, and proper Sabbath laws. (4) The State recognises the Church and allows her full permission to develop her own government without hindrance.

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory, etc. Op. cit., p. 10.  
<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Memoir of Thomson of Banchory, pp. 201-202, 289-290.

Smeaton answers the contention that when the State and Church co-operate, the Church is harmed, by asserting that both act under the Headship of Christ for the temporal interests and eternal welfare of its members. The ruler may not direct or taint the theology, but he may and should reform a corrupt Church, and inspect the Church and her dominions. Most rulers have failed to exercise their rights or perform their duties. Smeaton complains that the Voluntary theory is completely negative, quoting the statement of Alexander Anderson: "Nothing religious is to be enforced on the ground of civil authority; and . . . nothing civil is to be enforced on the ground of divine authority."<sup>1</sup> Such separation of Church and State, declares Smeaton, is based on the presupposition that the State is common and unclean, degrades the State, seeks to separate natural and revealed religion, and forces the Christian ruler into the impossible situation of accepting God's Word as a man, but ignoring God's revealed will in his official capacity. A Christian magistrate must further God's purposes, and Christ's kingdom on earth every way he can, for his office is held by permission of Christ.

(5) The State endows the Church by applying national funds to the religious instruction of the community due to the

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 26.

three tenets that the Nation is subject to Christ, religion is necessary for the ends of government and right morality, and that a nation must be prevented from sinking into ignorance and irreligion through lack of adequate schools and churches.<sup>1</sup>

The primary criticism of this theory as a whole is its idealism, which depends so completely upon a benign Christian ruler and a loving, sympathetic people. It would be impossible to maintain such a balance for long, short of the millennium. Smeaton himself states the Voluntary answer to the argument in the appendix to the tract on National Christianity, and gives no answer, perhaps because he feels none necessary. The Voluntaries' two arguments are difficult to refute: (1) If a nation acknowledges a certain creed, it encroaches on private judgment, for there never will be complete agreement by all members of a nation. Smeaton insists that a truly Christian ruler would allow for private differences, but such a Utopian Christian State is not yet visible. (2) When religious profession and government blend, a change of government necessitates a change of religion.<sup>2</sup> British history supplies ample illustration of such exigences and world history adds superabundant confirmatory evidence. Human nature is sinful

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory, etc. Op. cit., pp. 4-10.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 124.

still, and the State either controls the Church, or the Church controls the State, or there is separation along Voluntary principles. Scotland is unique in her National Church, yet State endowment is no more, and the civil magistrate no longer rules on the ground of divine authority. Since civil government in Scotland recognises religion, and the national Church advises and supports the government in providing the civic sanctions for Christian morality,<sup>1</sup> this appears to be a healthy relationship, though probably not the ideal.

Smeaton tabulates quotations from the Swiss, Gallican, Scottish, Helvetic, Belgic confessions which prove that the Reformation leaders in these countries assumed the tenet of national obligation to Christ. The Westminster Confession is expounded concerning this matter and presented as a culminating proof that a National Establishment is in accord with Reformed tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore the three Voluntary negations of National Christianity have calamitous significance for Smeaton:

(1) No national sanction of a specific creed is allowed in setting up a civil establishment of religion.<sup>3</sup> That is, "the State can have no creed." The reasons given by the Voluntaries are, that the civil ruler cannot discover truth, the Christian faith is too sacred for the "defiling

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<sup>1</sup> Buchan and Smith, Kirk in Scotland. Op. cit., pp. 226-227.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., pp. 92-101.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 38.



touch of civil authority,"<sup>1</sup> and the State must be impartial to all religions. But, Smeaton objects, the ruler need only accept and approve the creed already adopted by the Church, the nation should be the subject of God's moral government, and in any State one religion is recognised above all others. Smeaton quotes Calderwood, a Voluntaryist, as saying that the Bible must be Parliament's guide. This is already a creed, for "a creed is the sense in which we receive and interpret Scripture."<sup>2</sup> Smeaton warns that if the State cannot sanction a creed, then the Church cannot criticise or stop a non-Protestant succession, and this is essentially true. (2) The civil magistrate may not set up a civil Establishment of religion;<sup>3</sup> yet Smeaton says this is the national duty, though civil establishments rust and err, become corrupt and inefficient; yet they are the only way a nation has ever been pervaded with Christian truth. (3) The civil ruler may not provide for the Church out of national resources.<sup>4</sup> It is the author's conviction that this is the sensitive point in Smeaton's defence, for he presents no reliable supporting Scripture evidence, but simply reiterates that the State should have the privilege of giving free-will offerings.

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1 Ibid., p. 39.

2 Ibid., p. 44.

3 Ibid., p. 47.

4 Ibid., p. 55.

Galatians, 6:6<sup>1</sup> is the only text the United Presbyterians use; Smeaton admits its validity, but says there are other rules which supersede it, without, however, stating them. Smeaton quotes Wardlaw as saying that the Free Church unites with the Voluntaries in agreeing that "the magistrate has nothing to do with religion in the way of control. A Voluntary goes just a step further, but quite in the same direction, when he adds, nor of endowment either."<sup>2</sup> Smeaton felt this to be one step too far, and proof of the depth of his feeling is shown by the vehement expression of his opinion in the closing pages of his article on the Scottish Theory of Ecclesiastical Establishments, which condemned the Voluntary crusade on three grounds: (1) It proposes to substitute a non-religious, secular, atheistic State for the Christian State. The ideal ruler would be a "bad man" to whom all religions are alike. (2) This movement would neutralize the oath sworn by the King and Parliament to the Constitution, amounting to "the most revolting perjury."<sup>3</sup> (3) The movement proposes the wholesale confiscation of Church property, a "detestable sacrilege."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., pp. 27-28.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton says the audacity of the proposal should render it "innocuous" (sic) to all reflecting men. For a man of his erudition that was a surprising mistake, for he obviously considered it extremely dangerous.

<sup>4</sup> Smeaton, The Scottish Theory, etc. Op. cit., pp. 19-21.

These are rather extreme statements which do not represent the Voluntary aims and views quite accurately. Even though one may be disturbed at the usually "amiable," placid theologian losing his calm, gracious bearing, a considered judgment admits that Smeaton's customary fairness of attitude also deserted him here, for these three condemnations must be to a large extent classified as unwarranted projections of a vivid imagination, rising from lifelong bias.

#### Criticism of Smeaton's Position

Smeaton represented the accepted doctrine of the Free Church at the time of the Disruption. In his polemic on Church and State he battles valiantly and most earnestly, but the following weaknesses in his position make it untenable to-day: (1) In its entirety it is impractical and unrealistic, taking too small cognizance of human sin and frailty as well as of the full testimony of history.<sup>1</sup> (2) The Scripture basis for the Establishment principle is very unsound, practically the entire foundation resting on a questionable interpretation of one part of Old Testament history. (3) Even though the testimony of the Confessions is impressive there is not due recognition of the political aspects involved in the Reformation in enlisting the

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<sup>1</sup> Some religious groups who maintain this doctrine of Church and State to this day (i.e. the Reformed Presbyterians in the U.S.A.) refuse to vote in national elections.

help of rulers against Papal authority. Also it is carried over from the rule of the Papal State.

(4) Most of the principal Voluntary allegations, though honestly faced, were not convincingly answered. This calls attention to the fact that some of Smeaton's objections were of a personal nature. (5) Many of Smeaton's criticisms of the Voluntaries were unwarranted inferences, actually refuted by his own quotations of their writers in another place.<sup>1</sup> (6) Smeaton, along with his colleagues, built minor issues into major ones and thus provoked unnecessary bitterness. However, there is no doubt of his sincerity in proclaiming these doctrines as vital. (7) One of the two essential principles of the Free Church, spiritual independence or the Headship of Christ, was not denied in essence by the Voluntaries.<sup>2</sup> (8) A vital Christianity is never achieved by legislation.

Some of Smeaton's views, however, have enduring value. (1) His conviction that outward union was not right, along with the concomitant circumstances, was not only accepted, though reluctantly, by the majority in his day, but is worthy of constant consideration by groups considering union to-day. A book written to commemorate the union of Scottish Presbyterianism in 1929 verifies

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 19-20 No. 1 in The Scottish Theory, etc. by Smeaton. Also pp. 25-26 in National Christianity, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, National Christianity, etc. Op. cit., p. 124.

this outlook:

"No union is of any lasting value in which the whole does not absorb the honest loyalties formerly given to the parts. . . Unless the union of the churches is attended not merely with a freedom from contention but with a positive increase of vigour and purpose, far better was the old sectarianism."<sup>1</sup>

(2) Smeaton's emphasis of the true union of all believers in Christ, enabling fellowship between people of differing viewpoints, is a Christian outlook that is healthy and is needed to-day. (3) The ideal of the Establishment of National Christianity is well worth maintaining, and should be an incentive to all churches to preach the gospel with the purpose of sending many consecrated, dedicated people into political life under Christ's Lordship, and to endeavour by faithful prayer and Christ-centred living to win the nation to a genuine Christian testimony.

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<sup>1</sup> Buchanan and Smith, The Kirk in Scotland. Op. cit., pp. 217-218.

## CHAPTER VII

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### GEORGE SMEATON'S CONTRIBUTION TO THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

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The study of Smeaton's works has been an enlightening and edifying experience, for Smeaton was an erudite and noble Christian gentleman. This quality shines through his gracious writing, indicating that personally he maintained the highest ethical and Christian ideals. He was a man of strong theological conviction, yet he showed surprising patience with men of opposing views, if he deemed them sincere.<sup>1</sup>

Because of these obvious admirable characteristics, one of the first queries in the writer's mind was, why did the writings of such an intelligent, gifted, and scholarly man so soon fall into comparative obscurity? The writer has spoken of Smeaton with many in Britain. Only a very few outside of the theological faculties knew of him at all, and these, almost all ministers, knew nothing of his teaching.

Some of the reasons became apparent in estimating Smeaton as a writer - he is exceedingly wordy and repetitious, taking many pages to present a few facts or ideas. As a result, the progress of thought is often tedious, and one is frequently aware of being mentally

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<sup>1</sup> William Knight, Some Nineteenth Century Scotsmen, p. 115.



"becalmed". Smeaton is not difficult to follow or hard to understand; he simply does not command constant interest, nor does he consistently reward concentration of thought. Therefore only the most interested theologian is apt to use his works. Moreover, serious study of his writings discovers disturbing inaccuracies in the quotation of Scripture passages cited to support his contentions, which tend to cause the scholar not to trust his conclusions, and this diminishes the value of his otherwise careful exegetical expositions. Another technicality, revealing carelessness, is his erratic capitalization of words.

Two reviewers, who most favourably received Smeaton's first volume on the atonement, gave contradictory reports of his writing. One wrote: "The idea of the work is most happy, and the execution of it is worthy of the idea."<sup>1</sup> The other is forced to admit: "The effect, however, of this immense erudition is occasionally marred by a certain carelessness of style, which we cannot but regret, as the matter of the book is worthy of the best style the author can command."<sup>2</sup>

A more pertinent cause for neglect of his work is discovered in the weaknesses of his theological thought.

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<sup>1</sup> British and Foreign Evangelical Review. Vol. XVII, July, 1858, p. 650.

<sup>2</sup> Reformed Presbyterian Magazine, March, 1869, p. 116.

Smeaton, representing others of his day, erred in minimizing the active participation of God the Father in the redemption of man from the curse and power of sin. His teaching on vicarious punishment, requiring God's wrath to be visited upon His sinless but sin-bearing Son, in order that the Father's honour can be restored, is hard to reconcile with the overwhelming love of God as the source of the atonement and reconciliation. The apparent discrepancy would have been resolved if Smeaton had ever perceived as truth or suggested that God in Christ suffered to conquer and take away sin, and reconcile man to Himself.

Smeaton's failure to recognise the resurrection as the keynote of the apostles' preaching, and the corresponding fact that the Cross is most clearly understood in the light of the resurrection, is another instance of his lack of awareness of the necessary unity of these two historical realities as the essential core of the gospel message. His tendency to assign all the blessings following the atonement as rewards given to Christ for merit of His finished work is neither an accurate nor adequate picture of New Testament teaching. His tendency to designate all Son of Man passages as representing vicarious atonement, and his ignoring of the import of Daniel 7 is remarkable, for

one of his conservative contemporaries wrote: "There can be no doubt that this passage in Daniel is the fundamental one, on which ... our Lord's favourite and familiar use of the phrase in question is based."<sup>1</sup>

In common with others of Smeaton's time and immediately following, there was little critical investigation of the Old Testament, the energies of British conservative scholars, as a rule, being devoted to a conservation of the orthodox doctrine against the increasing inroad of "mediating theology of the German schools of thought." Smeaton gave a place of paramount importance to the authority of tradition, but he failed to comprehend the possibilities of the eschatological factor in the understanding and interpretation of his doctrine.

Smeaton made faulty and unwarranted assumptions with little evidence, and has read his preconceived ideas into the exegesis upon several occasions. He goes behind revelation occasionally, and sets forth the hidden counsels of God with amazing assurance.

A. A. Hodge calls attention to a most striking example:

"The author, however, goes far beyond the bounds of Church doctrine or of actual Bible teaching or of our possible knowledge, when he teaches ... that in the constitution of the Theanthropic person

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, Hermeneutical Manual, p. 243.

of Christ, 'the communication from the one nature to the other was by the Spirit, the Executive of all the works of God'. Speculation, much more dogmatism on such a subject, is unprofitable and unbecoming."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, an appraisal by a contemporary states that Smeaton

"was always amenable to rule, always guarding against the capricious and the arbitrary, never straining to educe or support a foregone conclusion; by taking out of the text what is in it, never tempted to take more, - this very able theologian has presented us with an amount of truth on the doctrine of the Atonement, directly from the lips of the Great Deliverer himself, which has positively startled us by its amount, and delighted us by its consistency and its completeness."<sup>2</sup>

Smeaton is consistent, it is true, and gives an admirably complete presentation of the atonement doctrine, but the remainder of the claim cannot be substantiated. F. W. Farrar declares: "To quote a text, or even a dozen texts, in favour of this or that presentment of a doctrine, is a method of argument entirely inconclusive, unless we can prove that these texts bear the meaning which we attach to them, and no other."<sup>3</sup> Much of Smeaton's exegesis accomplished this proof, but some of the texts quoted by him can hardly contain the meaning attributed to them.

The most damaging criticism of Smeaton is that he

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<sup>1</sup> Presbyterian Review. Vol. IV, 1883., p. 454.  
Reference in Smeaton, Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> British and Foreign Evangelical Review, Vol. XVII, July, 1866, p. 652.

<sup>3</sup> The Atonement. A Clerical Symposium, pp. 69-70.

seldom presents a fresh theological concept or viewpoint. He therefore stirred up little antagonism, being considered by many to be one of the last of the old school with "the old . . . point of view."<sup>1</sup> Smeaton's main purpose was to conserve and defend established doctrine.

However, it must be remembered that Smeaton, as among the "last remnants" of a system of life and thought repudiated by an age which all too readily accepted the new discoveries of Higher Criticism, would naturally be ignored in the upheaval. Are there not some values to be gleaned from his work that were not only outstanding in his day, but are helpful to-day?

The system of doctrine presented by Smeaton is rigidly Calvinistic, but represents the typical conservative position of his day, and is still the representative view of a considerable segment of the Christian Church. The Free Church in Scotland even now holds in minute detail the doctrinal views espoused by him, and there are schools in the United States, very conservative in viewpoint, where his books and teachings are highly prized. In a recent brief conversation with an outstanding non-conformist clergyman<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Fleming, The Church in Scotland, 1843-1874, pp. 107, 180, 252.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. D. M. Lloyd-Jones, Buckingham Gate Congregational Church.

of London, the writer noted his comment on Smeaton, "I think he has been greatly neglected, and should be studied again." The dean of a conservative independent theological school<sup>1</sup> in eastern United States wrote in personal correspondence to the author: "We feel that he had a very great breadth of scholarship. His works show a very wide amount of research, and he has expressed himself well." But, "Smeaton probably did not make any distinctive contribution as far as theological formulation is concerned." His teaching on all matters, election, atonement, Church and State, inspiration, and the Holy Spirit was according to the Westminster Confession.

Smeaton's outstanding contribution to theological thought is his first volume on the atonement comprising the sayings of Jesus on this crucial doctrine. "Professor Smeaton has the distinguished merit of having led the way in the application of this method [Biblico-exegetical] to the elucidation of the central article of Divine revelation."<sup>2</sup> This approach to the atonement was new. The exegesis in this volume is careful and authentic, and the conclusions reached are, on the whole, legitimate and very informative. The breadth of his atonement teaching is most comprehensive. He reveals the gospel records

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. B. L. Goddard, Dean, Gordon Divinity School, Boston. (no relation to the author).

<sup>2</sup> Reformed Presbyterian Magazine, March 1869, p. 113.



of Christ's instruction as the source of apostolic teaching.<sup>1</sup> The unity of Christ and His apostles in their concept and teaching of the atonement is thoroughly established. It is regrettable that Smeaton's eagerness to prove conclusively the vicarious theory, caused him at times to overstep his self-determined bounds into the realm of ill-disguised conjecture, but this fact does not abrogate the cumulative power of the valid evidence presented. The second volume is adequate in exegesis. His philological clarity and soundness is generally dependable, for he was outstanding in his knowledge and understanding of Greek.<sup>2</sup> This acknowledged fact gives weight to his criticism of Ritschl as one "whose papers are at once speculative in doctrine, and conjectural in philology."<sup>3</sup> The complete two-volume work remains a source book of eminent worth on the atonement.

Since the vicarious atonement was the focal point on Smeaton's spiritual horizon, it is not surprising that

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1 Even though it is true that the written apostolic teaching antedated the written gospel records, the sayings of Jesus, for the most part, have their sources in the more original records of the earliest Christian community. Luke and John indicate their reference to the testimony of eyewitnesses. See Marcus Dods, The Bible, Its Origin and Nature, pp. 179, 183-210, especially 199-202.

2 It must be acknowledged that Smeaton failed to give consideration to the Hebrew roots of certain Greek words and meanings.

3 Smeaton, Doctrine of Atonement, Vol. I, p. viii (Preface)

all other doctrines radiate from that centre. He believed special inspiration was granted to proclaim to the world in writing the gospel of the Cross, and this inspiration guaranteed as truth the results of careful exegesis of New Testament teaching. He believed the doctrine of election manifests God's sovereign grace in atonement, and the efficacious power of the atonement. He believed that the Holy Spirit's chief function was to apply the atonement to the human heart, first in regeneration, then in sanctification, with the inspired Word as His sole instrument. He believed that the Church and the State both have the supreme and solemn duty of making the proclamation and teaching of the atoning work of Christ available to all. To him, these are mighty truths, worthy not only of serious theological discussion, but also of most earnest proclamation. But there is no atonement, to Smeaton, if it be not vicarious. His good friend, James Bannerman, could well have summed up Smeaton's thought on the atonement when he wrote, "Jesus' life and death were not only or chiefly the outward credentials of His doctrine, but rather the sum and substance of it."<sup>1</sup>

Smeaton vigorously combatted certain theological trends of his day which have found greater acceptance since his

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<sup>1</sup> James Bannerman, Inspiration of the Scriptures, p. 15.

time; therefore his arguments should exercise a restraining and balancing influence. His insistence upon the need of Scripture authority to avoid the "unbridled autonomy of the human mind" has been recognised as one extreme from which subsequent extreme reaction has now given way to an increasing return to Biblical authority. He argued very convincingly against the doctrine of absolute forgiveness as a primary weakness of the moral influence theory,<sup>1</sup> and established Christ's sacrifice as absolutely voluntary, refuting those who contended that He merely endured the normal result of his previous action. Smeaton proved that the Bible teaches the personality of the Holy Spirit and thus sought to offset the tendency to consider the Spirit as a mere influence, or to ignore Him altogether.

Smeaton's development of teaching on Christ as the second Adam is a precursor of a much greater interest in this theory to-day, especially in its relation to Jesus Christ as the representative of all humanity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wm. Temple admirably reflects a combined picture of Smeaton's strongest and weakest points of teaching: "What would be immoral on God's part, and demoralising to us, would be that He should say to us concerning all our selfishness and nastiness, 'Oh, never mind; come along; let us still be friends'. . . . He would be below the level of our own consciences. But no one, who has received his pardon from the lips of Christ on the Cross is going to think that God says, 'Never mind' or that He does not Himself mind. That is how He minds." William Temple, *Christian Faith and Life*, p. 77. Smeaton effectively writes: "Thus it appears from all history and experience, that conscience is so sensitive, that it will reject everything which may be offered to calm or heal it, till it finds repose and peace in the vicarious death of Christ." *Doctrine of the Atonement*, Vol. I, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Vincent Taylor, The Atonement in New Testament Teaching.

Smeaton emphasized Christ's victory over Satan and death, and this emphasis has been taken up and popularized to-day by Gustaf Aulén. Smeaton's claim that the only purpose of the incarnation is the atonement finds considerable confirmation in the thinking of to-day as well as of his day.

Smeaton's historical summaries, on atonement doctrine and on teaching concerning the Holy Spirit, were of significant importance in Smeaton's time and are still authoritative and excellent from a conservative point of view. Moreover, his criticisms of the teachings of certain historical figures are most suggestive of possible future fields of inquiry. For example: "Amyraldus . . . succeeded . . . in obtaining an acquittal from the charge of heterodoxy in 1649. But it was the death-blow of French Protestantism,"<sup>1</sup> and, "A more formidable work appeared from the pen of Junckheim in 1775. . . from which Germany has never recovered."<sup>2</sup>

Some of Smeaton's most exhilarating writing is found in his sermons, where his strong convictions and the intrinsic beauty and graciousness of his relation to God are most evident. His biography of Alexander Thomson of Banchory is a simple story of the life of a good man, in which Smeaton's own attitudes are advantageously reflected in his approving admiration of the sincere steadfastness

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 362.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 373.

and kindness of this country gentleman. But these works offer more in the way of spiritual blessing than of theological insight and thus cannot be particularly contributive to this thesis.

Smeaton has left many memorable sayings of his own, and in concluding this account of his contribution to theological thought, a few of the best will speak a final word of his keen Christian insight, and prove that his thoughts at their highest, were of eternal value.

God covers "our imperfections under that outspread righteousness which dresses heaven and earth in smiles."<sup>1</sup>

"We have but one public representative, corporate act performed by the Son of God, in which we share as truly as if we had accomplished that atonement ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

"On His [Christ's] person, the object of eternal love, the sin of man and the wrath of God came into collision as never had been seen since the world began."<sup>3</sup>

"Conscience . . . is pacified by nothing which does not pacify the justice of God. The blood of Christ does this, and nothing else can."<sup>4</sup>

Another companion saying: "Conscience . . . acquits only when God acquits."<sup>5</sup>

"Christ, in His entire obedience. . . won an unchallengeable title to life for such as are willing to be dependent on Him, and who were unable personally to meet the law's demand: 'This do, and thou shalt live'. "<sup>6</sup>

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1 Smeaton, Sermon, "The Real Presence of Christ." p. 17.

2 Smeaton, Doctrine of Atonement, Vol. II, p. 162.

3 Ibid., p. 277.

4 Ibid., p. 392.

5 Smeaton, Article "Anselm and his Theory of the Atonement," British and Foreign Evangelical Review, Vol. VIII, p. 947.

6 Smeaton, Doctrine of Atonement, Vol. I, p. 106.

"When preaching is based on Christ crucified. . . God inhabits the Word, and the Spirit comes in it with saving power, as with the rushing might wind."<sup>1</sup>

"If Christ invites us to His table, He certainly does not intend to be absent from it Himself."<sup>2</sup>

"A Sabellian view of the Spirit naturally leads men to the denial of the supernatural in any form."<sup>3</sup>

"Christian Ethics [and] . . . Philosophic Morals. . . cannot contradict each other in their ultimate decisions [although] . . . they start from totally different principles, and move in totally different spheres."<sup>4</sup>

"Where the Spirit builds a church, Satan builds a chapel."<sup>5</sup>

"Faith means spirit-given trust on the divine mercy and on a personal Saviour, as opposed to man's native self-reliance."<sup>6</sup>

"Faith gives wings to theological intelligence."<sup>7</sup>

Smeaton's contribution to theological thought was significant in his day and it is the author's hope that this account of his work will call attention to the elements of lasting value presented in his writings.

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<sup>1</sup> Smeaton, Sermon, "The Faithful Labourer's Reward in Heaven," p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Smeaton, Sermon, "The Real Presence of Christ," p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Smeaton, Doctrine of Holy Spirit, p. 402.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 284. This may have been said before but Smeaton has made it his own.

<sup>6</sup> Smeaton, Doctrine of the Atonement, Vol. I, pp. 341-342.

<sup>7</sup> Smeaton, Necessary Harmony between Doctrine and Spiritual Life, p. 26.



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